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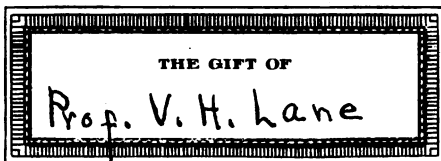
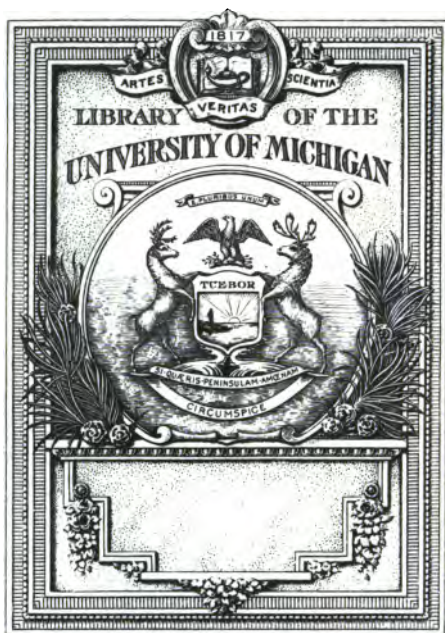
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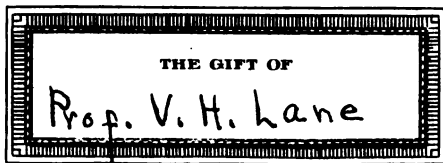
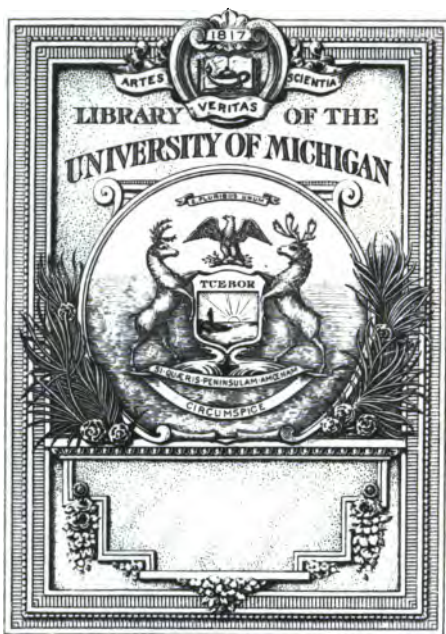
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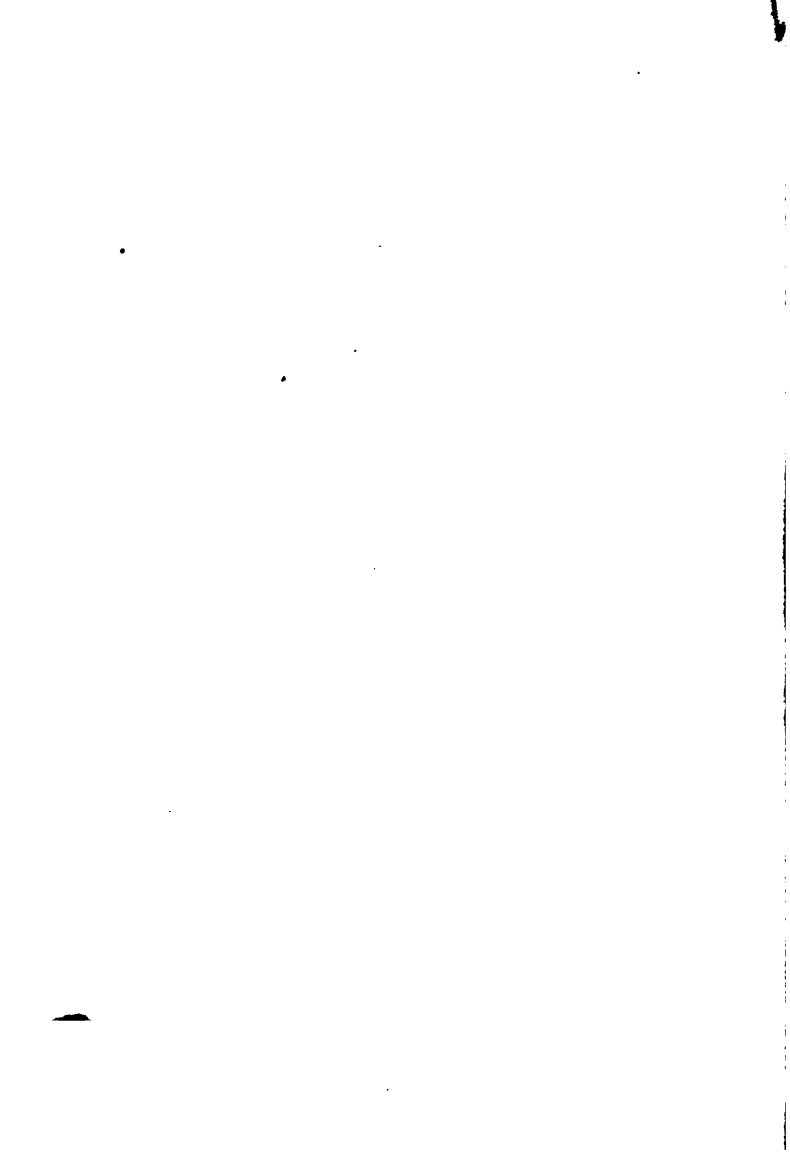
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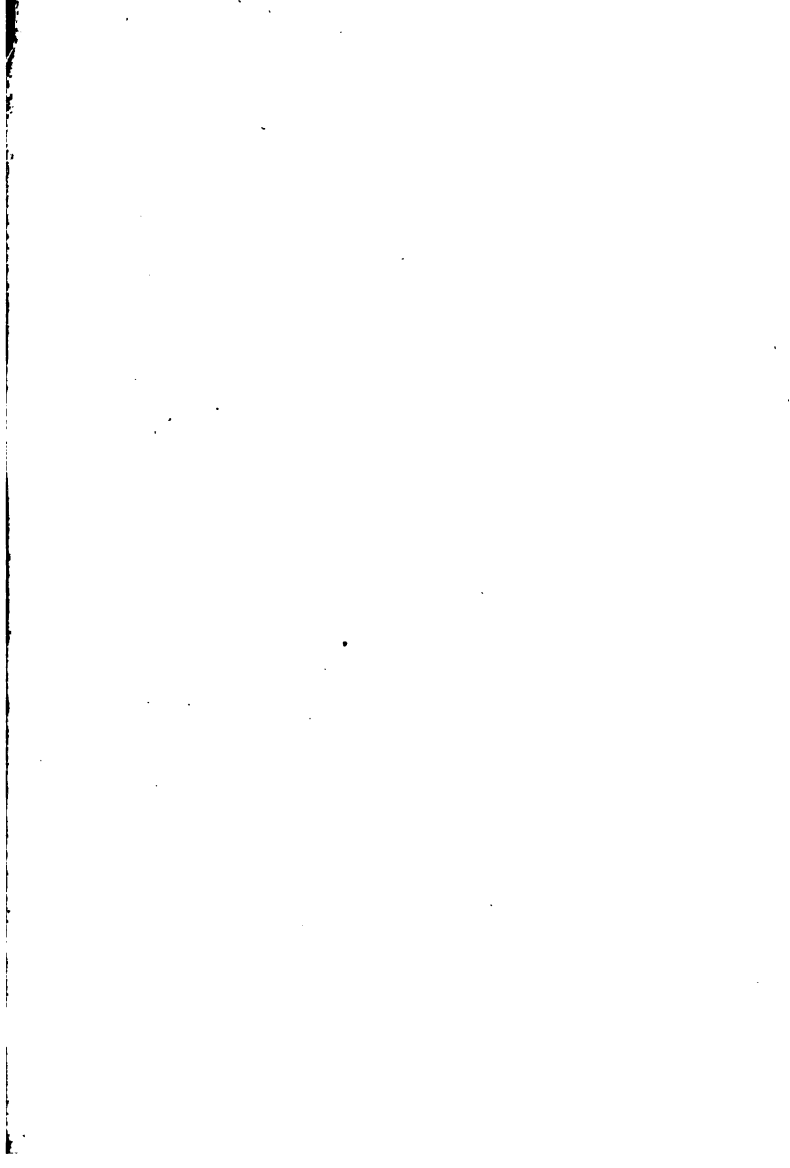


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# THE LAST WEEK WITH JESUS.

REV. T. M. McCONNELL, A.M.

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"Come, saints, and adore him: come, bow at his feet!  
O give him the glory, the praise that is meet:  
Let joyful hosannas unceasing arise,  
And join the full chorus that gladdens the skies."

—M. DE FLEURY.

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## Editor's Preface.

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THE last week of our Lord's earthly life, known in ecclesiastical history as "Passion Week," was crowded with events of stupendous interest. These events are therefore detailed with great fullness in the Gospel narratives, especially by the apostle John. The hours were numbered in which the Redeemer was to finish his great work on earth, and how was he "straitened until it was accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.) Always intensely energetic, he was, if possible, still more so during this eventful week. His enemies were also unusually active and malignant. His own calm and gentle spirit was free from the agitations that embarrass common men in seasons of severe trial, while his manner exhibited a growing sadness, and his words an increasing tenderness, as the end approached. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." (John xiii. 1.) His teaching seems to deepen and expand, to glow with a diviner earnestness, as it reveals greater wonders and holier mysteries in the work of redemption. His disciples feel an increasing reverence and awe in his presence as the shadows of Gethsemane and the cross gather about him. He submits to reproach, shame, and death with a meekness and gentleness that has no par-

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allel in human history. All the incidents connected with this week of sorrows are instructive and suggestive. They furnish topics of endless study.

The author has given in the following pages a consecutive series of carefully prepared historical and expository sketches touching all the recorded events of Passion Week. His style is clear and vigorous, his arrangement natural and perspicuous, and his spirit calm, judicial, and devout. Every page shows the work of a thoughtful, conscientious student of the Bible, whose object is to set forth Christ in all his glorious perfections as the Redeemer and Saviour of men. His conception and his treatment of the subject are in some respects new, but there is nothing novel or sensational about the book. It is a book that every devout Christian will read with delight, and such as will furnish food for thought and a stimulus to personal piety. We will place it among our best Sunday-school books, and hope that it will be extensively useful. The author is an honored minister of the gospel, whose pen is consecrated to the Master's service.

W. G. E. CUNNINGHAM,  
Sunday-school Editor

Nashville, Tenn., October, 1886.

# A WEEK WITH JESUS.

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## Introductory.

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NO period of our Lord's earthly life is more profoundly interesting to the devout student than that embraced in the last week, known in ecclesiastical history as "Passion Week," beginning on Sunday, April 2d, the day of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and closing on the following Friday in the bloody tragedy of the cross. Around these few eventful days cluster many of the most thrilling incidents and instructive lessons connected with the history of the incarnation.

In order properly to appreciate his conduct amid the severe trials through which he was called to pass ere his life-work was

finished, we must call to mind the object for which he came into the world; and especially must we go back through several long, weary weeks, and contemplate him as he bids a final farewell to Galilee, and starts forth upon his journey to Jerusalem, for the very purpose of encountering ignominy and death. It is impossible for human language to describe or human imagination to conjecture his feelings as he turns away forever from these familiar scenes. Here it was he had spent his childhood, his boyhood, and his young manhood—those deeply interesting and important but obscure and unrecorded years of his earthly pilgrimage. Here it was he gave the first manifestation of his Divine power, and entered upon his official career. Here it was he formally made choice of “the Twelve,” and delivered through them to the assembled multitude that grand inaugural of his Messianic reign, the wonderful “Sermon on the Mount.” Here it was he spoke many of his richest parables and performed many of

his most noted miracles. Here it was "he came to his own, and his own received him not." And so after many weeks of earnest effort and patient waiting, he turns reluctantly away from these familiar scenes and cherished associations, for the purpose of "going up to Jerusalem."

Going up to Jerusalem! How these words open up the flood-gates of the soul, when we call to mind the place to which and the object for which he was going; for around the name of no city, either ancient or modern, do so many holy memories cluster as around the name of Jerusalem. From the earliest mention of it as the royal residence of Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 18), on down to the present, as it lies a heap of moldering ruins, it has ever been an object of the deepest interest; and whether we consider it as a type of heaven, or as merely the chief city of God's chosen people, or in its strange and mournful connection with the scenes of suffering and days of darkness of the "Man of sor-

rows," it challenges our attention as scarcely any thing else can do. Then, for this place of unusual interest, at a time of unusual interest, and with a purpose of unusual interest, the Master and his disciples set out upon their journey; and when we come to study the picture of the little company, as sketched by Mark, we find that "Jesus went before them," as if impatient to "suffer the things predicted of him, and enter into his glory."

With true artistic skill Mark gives us in these few words a graphic description of one of the grandest scenes ever witnessed upon earth. Farrar calls it the "transfiguration of self-sacrifice," and describes Christ "going forth to meet death with bowed head, in all the majesty of sorrow;" and as he thus precedes his disciples like an intrepid leader, they are at once "amazed" at his dauntless courage, and "afraid" for their own safety. Thus, although the bloody cross stands in full view at the end of the journey, he turns neither



to the right-hand nor to the left, but presses onward with firm, unfaltering footstep, only pausing to administer to the wants or alleviate the sufferings of some poor child of sorrow. Neglecting no opportunity for teaching ignorance or ameliorating distress, but dividing his time between parables of instruction and miracles of mercy, he at last nears the goal of his heart's holiest purposes, reaching the little village of Bethany on Friday evening, March 31, just one week before his execution upon the cross of Calvary; for John tells us that "Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was." How sweet to the weary wanderer, and how soothing to his sorrowing soul, must have been this renewal of friendship amid such sacred associations! Here, uninterrupted, he can rest his exhausted body and refresh his sad spirit, surrounded by friends true and tried; and so, amid the holy hush of that quiet retreat, he spends his last earthly Sabbath, keeping it holy unto God

by carefully resting from his customary labors, and calmly communing with kindred spirits in regard to the high and holy mysteries of redemption.

Sunday, April 2, A.D. 30.

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THE next day, the tenth of Nisan, answering to our 2d day of April, was memorable in the history of the Jews as the day on which the "paschal lamb" was separated from the flock, and set apart for sacrifice on the 14th day of the same month. So Christ on this day, by his own voluntary act, separates himself from the multitude as the Messiah, the "Paschal Lamb by God appointed," to be slain at the approaching Passover. On this first day of the week, then, destined to be celebrated evermore as marking a new epoch in the history of the world, Christ and his disciples renew their journey toward Jerusalem, having kept the Sabbath and refreshed themselves in the hospitable home of Lazarus and his sisters.

The incidents connected with this last

visit of our Lord to the Jewish metropolis are recorded by all the evangelists; and, in fact, nearly all those unspeakably grand and majestic scenes which cluster around his last days upon earth are reflected from the pages of four concurrent records. The thrilling drama of that illustrious life is now well-nigh finished, the goal upon which the earnest eye has been so long fixed is almost reached, for the little company of wayworn and foot-sore travelers has come "nigh to Jerusalem."

Pausing at some convenient point on the Mount of Olives, so sacredly embalmed by the memories which cluster around it, he casts his eye over the familiar scenes before him, and as each well-known object passes in review, his heart swells and his breast heaves with the intensity of his emotions. For a time he stands gazing, no doubt, upon the gorgeous panorama before him, wrapt in contemplation; then calling the little company around him he makes known to them

what is about to occur, and in order that the prophecy may be properly fulfilled, he "sends forth two of his disciples" to a neighboring village. The disciples sent upon this mission were, most probably, the Master's favorites, Peter and John, because Mark's precise narration of the circumstances indicates an eye-witness, and so suggests Peter, who was perhaps the real author of the book bearing Mark's name, Mark being employed as his amanuensis.

The Master, having given to these disciples the most minute directions in regard to the execution of their mission, sends them forth, and during their absence employs the time, no doubt, in giving to those who remained with him a more detailed account of the scenes just before them.

Coming to the house of the man to whom they were directed, Peter and John find the colt standing at the gate, and readily obtain permission from the owner, who was most probably himself a disciple, to take it for the

Master's use. Returning to the mountain, they "cast their garments" on the colt and set Jesus thereon, with great eagerness no doubt, anticipating the fulfillment of the prophecy, and believing that their long-cherished desires were about to be realized in the "restoration of the kingdom to Israel;" and our Lord, assuming for the first and only time a position of *royalty*, allows them thus to act as his attendants. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and so, with this one exception, his whole life was spent in serving others.

In addition to the twelve disciples, friends from Bethany and pilgrims from all parts of Palestine, who were going up to the Passover, gather around him as the central figure; and learning what was about to occur, they vie with each other in showing respect to one so soon to be proclaimed "King of the Jews," never for a moment dreaming that the proclamation would be made from the cross. As a token of honor "many spread their gar-

ments in the way," while others "cut down palm-branches," and strew them upon the ground before him as a symbol of the joy they feel in view of the victory about to be achieved.

The fame of his coming having preceded him, many of the vast multitudes then assembled in Jerusalem for the Passover, attracted by a desire to witness some manifestation of his miraculous power, or with the eager expectation that he was really coming to free the nation from the galling yoke of Roman oppression, go forth to give him a hearty welcome; for, as John tells us, "much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem; took branches of palm-trees and went forth to meet him." And having met the approaching multitude, at some point on the sunny slopes of Olivet, they turn and precede the royal rider, while those who accompanied him from Bethany follow after, thus voluntarily constituting a conspicuous cor-

tege; and forming a responsive chorus, they chant the well-known words of the "*Hallel*," or Jewish ritual, the one company answering to the other, as in their worship at the "Feast of Tabernacles."

Luke here gives a graphic touch to this already sublime picture, for he says, "When he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives," having reached some point where the city with its crowded streets and glittering pageantry suddenly bursts upon the view, awakening a thousand sacred memories and kindling a thousand eager anticipations in their breasts, the mighty multitude can no longer restrain their feelings, and so with a shout that arouses many a slumbering echo they renew their joyous cry: "Hosanna! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!" The words were borrowed from the "*Hallel*," and were varied by the many voices by which they were uttered; but whatever the form of expression, the sentiment



was always the same, indicating the blissful belief that the one whom they thus proclaimed King was about to "restore again the kingdom of Israel," by seating himself upon the "throne of his father David;" for even the disciples, notwithstanding their Master's teachings to the contrary, seem not to have comprehended that he intended any thing more than the simple restoration of political power and glory to the Jewish nation. But in that happy crowd there were some who regarded these demonstrations with any thing but pleasurable emotions, for, as Luke tells us, Christ's old enemies, the Pharisees, were shocked at the honors thus conferred; and, no doubt alarmed at his evident popularity, they ask that the multitude be "rebuked."

Hitherto Christ had discouraged all demonstrations in his favor, but upon this one occasion, as Brown suggests, "he seems to yield his soul to the wide and deep acclaim with a mysterious satisfaction, regarding it

as so *necessary* to his regal entry that "if these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out." With his emotions thus stirred to their very depths by these surroundings and the events about to transpire, this untimely interference of the Pharisees, in such striking contrast with the glad acclaim of the multitude opens up the flood-gates of his pent-up feelings, and wrings from him that memorable lamentation over Jerusalem, and that fearful prophecy concerning its destruction, recorded in the nineteenth chapter, and verses 41 to 44 of the same: "For when he was come near," and his eye rested upon the gorgeous panorama spread out before him, contrasting its prosperous past and its privileged present with its fearful future, "he beheld the city, and wept over it," while the mighty multitude, no doubt, hushed their glad acclaim in mute amazement.

Journeying on with the increasing crowd (for as Matthew tells us at his approach the

“whole city came together”), he at last reaches the long-expected goal; and so in regal state, but with majestic meekness, he “enters into Jerusalem;” and by this triumphal entry, in fulfillment of the well-known prophecy of Zechariah (ix. 9), he proclaims himself, to friend and foe alike, the long-promised Messiah.

As the appropriate place for the ending of this triumphal march he enters the temple, where he is greeted by the “children,” with the welcome words, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Pausing for a moment, he “looks round about upon all things” with an authoritative air; and so having thus taken formal possession of his Father’s house, “the evening having come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve,” there in the peaceful quiet of that hallowed home to rest from the nervous excitement of that busy and eventful day, and prepare for the solemn scenes yet before him.

Monday, April 8, A.D. 30.

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AFTER spending the night with his friends at Bethany, our Lord and his disciples turn their footsteps again toward the city; for, as though impatient to be "about his Father's business" and to "work the works of him that sent him," he starts upon his journey, as Matthew tells us, "in the morning."

Probably, as upon a former occasion, he had "risen up a great while before day, and departing into a solitary place, there prayed;" or it may be, deeply impressed as he was with the solemn scenes just before him, he had stolen away from his sleeping disciples, and in the sublime solitudes of the mountain had "continued all night in prayer to God." At any rate, they seem to have started from Bethany very early, doubtless

before breakfast, for the record states that "he was hungry"—an evidence of his true humanity, and one of many proofs to his suffering people that "in all their affliction he was afflicted," and that "he was in all points tempted like as we are."

As the little company journey along the familiar pathway across Mount Olivet, they espy in the distance a fig-tree in full foliage, and the sight at once awakens the hope of finding fruit to satisfy their hunger, for the fruit of the fig-tree appears before the leaf and matures along with it; so that, although the leaves may have been premature, yet their existence indicated the presence of fruit, and so justified the hope of Christ and his disciples.

A fig-tree was no unusual sight, as that section of country abounded with them; but one "having leaves" was unusual at that time of year, as the figs do not ripen before June or July, and so it very naturally arrested their attention. But "when he came to

it he found nothing but leaves"—a mere pretense, an empty boast; whereas, "having leaves," although premature, according to the laws of its nature it ought to have had fruit, and so stands as a fit symbol of the Jewish nation with its arrogant claims, as well as a type of hypocrisy in all ages. The statement of the historian that "the time of figs was not yet," instead of being intended to excuse it for its want of fruit, was no doubt made for a purpose the very reverse—viz., to justify the judgment passed upon it; for, being so early in the season, no fruit would have been expected of it had it not been for its own boastful pretenses in "having leaves;" and so, as though the tree had voiced forth its empty claims, "Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever"—one solitary act of destruction amid manifold miracles of mercy. But, as Brown strikingly suggests, "Christ's words did not make the tree barren; they only sealed it up in its own barrenness."

Barren, then, and belonging to no one, its loss was immaterial; but, after all, the act was perhaps only typical and symbolical, intended by the Master to foreshadow the destruction of the fruitless nation over whose representative city he had wept the day before—a sort of object-lesson, setting forth the danger and dreadful doom of all hypocrites.

As they continue their walk toward the city, Jesus no doubt explains to his disciples the solemn lessons of which the destruction of the fig-tree was the illustration, until finally, having reached their destination, they go directly into the Temple, as the seat and center of the spiritual kingdom; and, finding it disturbed by traffic and defiled by dishonesty, Jesus begins the work of purification and reform by “casting out them that sold and bought.” This he had done before upon his first visit to Jerusalem (John ii. 14-16) at the outset of his ministry; but the people having forgotten this wholesome les-

son, he now repeats the act as an evidence of his kingly authority and his right to rule over his own house. All Temple dues were required to be paid in Jewish coin, so that "money-changers" who could convert Greek and Roman money into the national currency were necessary, as well as a market where "doves" and other things needed in the ceremonial worship could be bought and sold; and not only were they necessary, but legitimate and right, for they had been provided by divine command (Deut. xiv. 23, 26). So that what Christ meant to rebuke was not the exercise of these manifest rights, but the want of respect and reverence for the Lord's house, evidenced by those who thus recklessly mingled the bustle of business with the sacredness of the sanctuary. His object, no doubt, was to impress them with a sense of the sacred and holy character of the place as the emblem of the Divine presence. And there was probably something in his appearance, as he thus sought to vindicate the sanc-



tity of his Father's house, that compelled submission. Even the very outskirts of the Divine dwelling-place were holy, and to be kept separate from worldly associations; and so, by means of this second object-lesson, or illustration, he teaches the people the sanctity of the Temple and the reverence with which they ought to enter it, for it was designed to be a "house of prayer"—a place of worship and communion with God, and therefore not to be desecrated by worldly business; but it had been prostituted from its original design, and made a "den of thieves." These words of Christ indicate a band of robbers leagued together for dishonest purposes; for, although the avocation of these men was in itself legitimate and right, they were dishonest in their dealings and wicked in their indifference to the sanctity of the place where their business was conducted. Among others who witnessed his conduct and heard his words were his old enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees. They could not

deny the fact that the Temple had been desecrated, nor in their legal strictness could they approve of the desecration, but they were displeased that another should begin the work of reformation, and especially since they regarded that other as an enemy; and so, instead of encouraging the reform, they seek an excuse for destroying the reformer, which they had already resolved to do some time previous to this (John xi. 47-53). But just how to accomplish this purpose was a difficult problem, for "they feared him because all the people were astonished at his doctrine" and "were very attentive to hear him," so that they justly feared a tumult if they should attempt to arrest him in public. What their plan would have been it is impossible to determine had not the treacherous Judas come to their relief and solved the problem for them.

We have only the outlines of the labors of this day, and no doubt many other important lessons were taught as the eager

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multitude gathered around him, until his physical energies were well-nigh exhausted, so that he welcomed the hour when the twilight shadows began to gather over Jerusalem; for "when evening was come, he went out of the city" to spend another night with his friends at Bethany.

**Tuesday, April 4, A.D. 30.**

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**T**UESDAY, April 4, A.D. 30, was an exceedingly busy day in the life-history of the Son of man, and the last day of his public ministry. Having rested and refreshed themselves by another night of quiet repose in the peaceful home of Lazarus and his sisters, Christ and the twelve again rise early and start toward Jerusalem, intent on giving as much instruction as possible to the benighted people.

As they passed by the spot where Monday's miracle was performed, "they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots." They had not tarried on the preceding day to behold the effect of the curse, nor had they observed it in the twilight of the previous evening as they journeyed to Bethany; but now, in the full light of day, they behold the tree, not partially blighted, but dead root and branch;

and "Peter, calling to remembrance" the peculiar character of the miracle as the only one of destruction ever performed by his Master, and concluding therefrom that it must contain some special lesson, calls attention to the miracle in the hope of eliciting an explanation of it. He and his companions were astonished at the power which could produce such effects (Matt. xxi. 20), but Jesus, instead of going into a detailed explanation of the miracle, merely gives them the key to this power—viz., faith in God, which would enable them not only to move mountains, but even mightier moral obstacles.

Continuing the conversation as they journey on toward the city, our Lord gives a wider range to the subject, making faith not only the means for securing miraculous power—so necessary to the apostles as furnishing credentials for them in their future missionary labors—but also as the essential factor in all acceptable prayer.

Christ's language on this occasion (Mark xi. 24) seems to give an unwarrantable latitude in prayer, and to open the door to the wildest fanaticism; but by recurring to the Greek we find the condition upon which this seemingly unlimited promise rests to be the "faith of God"—*i. e.*, such as God gives, requires, and rewards—and so must necessarily limit the desires of the soul to things agreeable to the Divine will. Our Lord here links forgiveness with faith as a condition of acceptable prayer for the purpose, as Campbell suggests, of counteracting the revengeful feelings which he well knew would soon arise in the hearts of his disciples against the enemies who accomplished the death of their Master. But in a secondary sense it was no doubt intended to reach and apply to all his disciples in all ages of the world.

The scene now changes from the solemn quiet of the mountain to the busy courts of the Temple, and is no longer one of loving intercourse between the Master and his

friends, but one of open and bitter hostility between him and his foes. His action on the day before in clearing the Temple of its reckless invaders could not fail to excite the jealousy and anger of its professed guardians; and, although afraid to lay violent hands upon him, they only awaited an opportunity to arraign him for unlawful interference in matters committed to their care. So, "when he was come again to Jerusalem, as he was walking in the Temple" and "teaching the people," "there came to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders"—a delegation representing the three classes which constituted the Sanhedrim, or supreme court of the Jewish nation, whose duty it was to keep order in the Temple and to examine into any unseemly conduct that might occur. This court had probably been in consultation the day before in regard to his conduct in the Temple, and "sought how to destroy him" (Luke xix. 47). The question with them was not for a moment wheth-

er he was deserving of death, but how to accomplish it without offending the multitude.

With this object in view, they now send their representatives to him, hoping to entrap him with puzzling questions, and so draw from him some statement upon which official action may be based. They claim their right, as custodians of the Temple, to challenge his conduct on the preceding day, and so demand of him, "By what authority doest thou these things?" But their interrogation no doubt refers to his actions for at least three days past, and probably to his entire ministry. Fully aware of their evil design, he replies by asking another question: "The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?" In other words, Was the ministry of John divine or human in its origin and authority? the most prominent feature of it being used to designate the whole. The answer to this question involves an answer to the other, and so it is not a mere idle eva-



sion, as some have tried to maintain. The Sanhedrim had upon a former occasion sent an official delegation to John, and he had unhesitatingly borne testimony in favor of Christ (John i. 19-34). In the report made by this delegation to the supreme court of the nation, they had received John's testimony, and in that testimony they had a sufficient answer to their present question; for, since they had admitted John's claims, they could not consistently reject Christ, concerning whom John testified; and so our Lord openly and formally challenges a reply, which he well knew they would not give. Thus placed in an embarrassing dilemma, which they evidently realized, "they reasoned with themselves," or discussed together the character and effect of their answer, anxious not to damage their reputation with the people, and at the same time determined to reject the claims of Christ. Their difficulty was not in determining the origin and character of John's authority, but

in meeting "*what he will say*;" for on the one hand, if they admit John's authority as a prophet, they must admit his testimony concerning Christ, but to admit that was to acknowledge his Messiahship. And, on the other hand, they dared not deny the Divine authority under which John labored, because "they feared the people, for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed." Finding themselves thus caught in a dilemma, and caring nothing for the truth, "they answered and said unto Jesus, We do not know"—deliberately telling a falsehood to extricate themselves from the difficulty, for they could not have been ignorant in regard to a question so important; or, if indeed ignorant, such ignorance was itself criminal in the appointed custodians of the spiritual interests of the nation.

Having thus exposed their hypocrisy, "Jesus answering, saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things." Unlike them, he does not say that he cannot

answer, but that he will not, since they had shown themselves unworthy of an answer, and by their refusal to reply to his question had made such answer altogether unnecessary. If they had honestly answered his question, they would have found therein a just and adequate answer to their own; but since they had declined to answer it, showing thereby that they discredited the testimony of John, to give any further proof of his Messiahship would be but to "cast pearls before swine," and therefore he refused to make any reply.

Taking advantage of the silence and awe produced by his reply, our Lord proceeds still further to disclose to the Pharisees the wickedness of their hearts. To do this he makes use of a series of parables, or parallel stories taken from the material world to inculcate spiritual truths, the word "parable" literally signifying something "thrown alongside" as an illustration. The first of the series is retrospective in its character, while the

other two have reference both to the past and future. Under the figure of a family consisting of a father and two sons, our Saviour represents two classes of men common in all ages of the world—viz., openly immoral, or outbreking sinners; and the self-righteous, or those who cover up their faults with an outward circumspection. To the first of these belonged the publicans and harlots, while to the other class belonged the Pharisees, against whom the parable was originally spoken. The Lord was the common Father of both classes, and so had a right to expect the same love and obedience from each; but when “he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,” he received in reply a rude and emphatic refusal, characteristic of reckless, hardened sinners who have laid aside the hypocrisies with which others attempt to hide their sins. Astonished and mortified by such an answer, the indulgent father turns to the other son with the same command, and in-

stantly he signifies his willingness to obey; but no sooner is the father out of sight than he dismisses the subject from his mind, and in the pursuit of selfish purposes forgets all about the command; while the other son, having an opportunity to reflect upon his conduct, repents of his disobedience and enters earnestly to work in accordance with his father's wishes.

Having thus described the conduct of the two sons, the Master turns to his adversaries with the question, "Whether of the twain did the will of his father?" and without realizing that their answer would condemn themselves, "they say unto him, The first." Having thus caused them to pass sentence of condemnation upon themselves, "Jesus saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you, for John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye when ye

had seen it repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Enraged by this application of the parable, the Pharisees would gladly have destroyed the speaker at once, or at least withdrawn from his presence; but the first they were afraid to do on account of his popularity, and the other he would not allow them to do; for, having begun to expose their villainy, he is determined to continue, and so he calls them to "hear another parable," in which, under a familiar Old Testament figure (Isaiah v. 1-7; Ezekiel xv. 1-8), he convicts the Jewish nation of their iniquity in rejecting the Lord's prophets, and also reveals in all its horrid enormity their contemplated wickedness in murdering the Son. Under the figure of a "householder" he represents God, who having himself "planted the vineyard" (representing the Jewish nation) he "lets it out to husbandmen" (representing the priests and scribes as the spiritual guides of the people), from whom he expects to receive the fruits

in compensation for the expense to which he had gone in fitting it up. In order that nothing may be wanting, he not only provides the necessary "wine-press" and "watch-tower," but he also carefully "hedges" it in with legal restrictions and ceremonial safeguards until the Jews are effectually separated from all surrounding nations. Having thus provided every thing necessary, until he can truthfully ask, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?" (Isa. v. 4) he leaves it to be cared for by the "husbandmen," having a right to expect an abundant vintage. And so at the season for gathering grapes he "sent his servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard;" but instead of cheerfully giving the stipulated rent, they utterly repudiate their obligations, for "they catch the servant and beat him, and send him away empty" (Jer. xxxvii. 15). Although no doubt greatly astonished at such conduct,

the owner of the vineyard, instead of instantly ejecting such tenants, exercises patience and forbearance toward them; and assuming that they must have misunderstood his message, or with the hope that upon reflection they had determined to do better, he "sends unto them another servant, but at him they cast stones (2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21), and send him away shamefully handled"—worse treated than the other. With strange forbearance the owner of the vineyard makes another effort to secure his rightful rent, and so sends a third servant, but "him they killed" (Jer. xxvi. 20-23), thus reaching the very climax of cruelty. But still the owner perseveres in his efforts to win by kindness the confidence of his wicked tenants, and so secure from them the willing payment of their debt, for he continues to send unto them "many other servants;" but "they do unto them likewise, beating some and killing some," just as the Jews had done to the prophets whom



God had sent unto them from time to time (Neh. ix. 26; 1 Kings xviii. 13, xix. 14, xxii. 24-27; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16).

Having exhausted, it may be, the store of other messengers—at any rate having proved the futility of sending mere servants—the “householder having yet therefore one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them.” Our Saviour here unmistakably identifies himself with the Father, and so gives an emphatic answer to the recent question of the Pharisees: “By what authority doest thou these things?”

Luke represents the owner of the vineyard after the repeated rejection of his servants, as being in great perplexity and anxiously asking, “What shall I do?” as if debating with himself the propriety of exposing his beloved Son to the cruelty of such men; and yet in the overflowing compassion of his heart he determines to make one last effort to reclaim them, and so, well knowing that “all men should honor the Son even as they

honor the Father" (John v. 23), he sends him forth, saying, "They will reverence my Son." No doubt such would have been the feelings of an earthly father, but such could not have been the feelings of God, for he well knew the reception that awaited his Son, and yet Luke's "*it may be* they will reverence him" is designed to teach, as Brown suggests, "the almost unimaginable guilt of not reverentially welcoming him." But while the owner of the vineyard, in his merciful forbearance, is thus patiently waiting for his Son to be received, those to whom he is sent are wickedly plotting to take his life, as the Pharisees were doing in their secret conferences at that very time, and so Jesus thus reveals to them his knowledge of their secret purposes. No sooner do the "husbandmen" discover the approach of the Son than they conspire to take his life, for they say one to another: "This is the heir; come let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."

We have here an interesting revelation of the sublime relation to the boundless stores of the universe sustained by the Son, "whom God hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2).

That Jesus was the Messiah, the rightful heir, seems to have been the conviction of some of his enemies, and perhaps accounts for their bitter opposition to him—for fear of losing the power and the peculiar privileges which they then enjoyed as the chosen nation of God (John xi. 48). But no sooner do the wicked "husbandmen" form the purpose of murdering the son than they carry it into execution, for they "caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him"—a solemn prophecy and striking picture of what actually occurred a few days afterward, when "they took Jesus and led him away unto a place called Golgotha, where they crucified him" (John xix. 17, 18).

Having thus exhibited the character of the wicked "husbandmen," Christ appeals to his

adversaries to pass judgment upon them, and they, little appreciating the true meaning of the parable, but prompted by the instincts of their natural conscience, unhesitatingly pass the terrible sentence of death and destruction upon themselves; for they say by a sort of awful alliteration, "He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons," words which were fearfully fulfilled a few years later in the destruction of Jerusalem, the center and symbol of the Jewish theocracy; when the "middle wall of partition was broken down," and the vineyard of God transferred to the Gentiles. Having thus a second time made his adversaries condemn themselves, our Lord gives them the terrible application of the parable: "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;" and as the awful significance of the parable begins to dawn

upon them, they cry out in consternation, "God forbid!"

The parable presents a complete picture of the spiritual truths to be illustrated, as far as it goes; but leaving, as it does, the Son "cast out of the vineyard" and "slain," it is necessary to supplement it by another well-known Bible figure, in order to give him his true place in the kingdom thus transferred to the Gentiles; and so, under the figure of a building, Christ represents himself as the "stone rejected" by the Jewish "builders," but through the exercise of divine wisdom and power exalted to become the "head of the corner," and so made to occupy the position of highest honor and greatest importance. (Eph. ii. 20, 21; 1 Peter ii. 4-6.) Just so the "cast out" and crucified Christ was by that very means to become "head over all things to the Church," that "at his name every knee should bow and every tongue confess."

Still more enraged by the application of

this second parable, "the chief priests and Pharisees sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people, for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them." But although they had thus repudiated him as their Messiah, he makes one more effort to reclaim them, and so makes use of a third parable, in which he sets forth their relation to God as one of *privilege* rather than one of *duty*; and thus the two parables mutually supplement and complete each other, for as Trench says: "In the one, a parable of law, God appears *demanding* something *from* men; in the other, a parable of grace, he appears as *giving* something *to* men. In the one he is displeased that his demands are not complied with, in the other that his goodness is not accepted.

Blending the well-known figures of a feast (Isa. xxv. 6, lxv. 13) and a marriage (Isa. lxi. 10, lxii. 5), our Lord sets forth still more clearly the relation which he sustains to the kingdom. In the former parable he

was the well-beloved "son of the household-er," but here he asserts his royal character as the son of a king. This king, in the exercise of his princely power and out of his royal bounty, provides a magnificent feast in honor of his son's marriage; and after all necessary preparations have been made, in accordance with an Eastern custom, he sends forth his servant to notify those who had been previously invited, but strangely enough "they would not come."• In the exercise of wonderful patience and forbearance, he places the most charitable construction possible upon their conduct, and graciously assuming that they must in some way have misunderstood the message, "he sends forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage."

The message is thus so plain that it cannot be misunderstood, and the feast is of such

a character that it is an honor to be invited; but so absorbed in their own affairs are the intended guests that they wholly disregard the kindness of their king, except to mock at his message and mistreat his messengers, for while some made light of the invitation and "went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise, the remnant took his servants and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." The insult, although offered to the servants, was intended for the king, and as such it is regarded and resented; for "when the king heard thereof he was wroth, and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city;" a striking portrayal of the destruction of Jerusalem a few years later by the Roman armies, who were but messengers of the Divine vengeance and agents of the Divine will.

Finding the Jews, who were thus invited, unworthy of the privileges bestowed upon them, and determined that the marriage of



his son shall be honored with suitable guests, the king commands his servants to go forth and herald the invitation to the Gentile nations; for "then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage."

Thus instructed, "the servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests."

When all were assembled in the guest-chamber, before admitting them to the feast, "the king came in to see the guests;" and he saw there a man which "had not on a wedding-garment," although, according to a probable Eastern custom, clothing suitable to the occasion had been provided gratuitously for all the guests, so that his appearance in his own soiled clothing was disrespectful to the company and an insult to the king; but graciously assuming that he had misunder-

stood the arrangements, and that the insult had not been intentional, the good king seeks to rectify the mistake, and so addresses him in language of kindness and conciliation: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless," because self-condemned. Finding the insult thus intentional and premeditated, the king feels in duty bound to resent it and punish the offender; and so he says to his servants: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Our Lord thus rises from the scenes which were then and there transpiring around him to that sublimer scene when, in the exercise of his princely power and royal rights, he shall sit in judgment upon the conduct of men, and shall irrevocably cast out from his presence all those who have presumed to appear before him in the "filthy rags" of their self-righteousness, in lieu of that spotless

robe which he, by his life of obedience and death of agony, has provided for his guests and offered to them "without money and without price."

This parable is not applied directly to the Pharisees, as were the others, for by this time they were, doubtless, able to make the application for themselves; and so, comprehending its significance, they became more determined than ever to put him to death. With this object in view, they withdrew from his presence and consulted among themselves "how they might entangle him in his talk," so that they might thereby secure some accusation against him.

Many a shrewd plot was formed by these determined enemies of our Lord during that eventful week, which failed only because the omniscient eye of God could read their hidden meaning. Their plot upon this occasion was exceedingly well laid, and was worthy of their malicious designs; for they send unto him a delegation selected from two rival

parties to ask his opinion in regard to the very question at issue between them; so that to espouse the cause of one was to give mortal offense to the other; and to make the plot still more complicated and cunning, the delegation represented both Church and State—the ecclesiastical side of the question being represented by the “Pharisees,” those strict constructionists of the law and close adherents to the rites and ceremonies of Jewish worship; and the civil aspect of it by the “Herodians,” a party of Jewish politicians who espoused the cause of the Herods, as forming a sort of protection against heathen rule, or on the other hand as effecting a compromise or amalgamation between the religion of their fathers and the philosophy of their heathen neighbors. The object of this delegation was to “catch him in his words,” or, as Luke says, “that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him into the power and authority of the governor.”

The priests, in their efforts to entrap him, had utterly failed to find a charge upon which they could arraign him before the ecclesiastical court, and so these wily politicians now attempt to secure an accusation upon which he may be arraigned before the civil court. They begin their effort with flattery, hoping thereby to win his favor, or at least to throw him off his guard; and so they declare their belief that he is an independent thinker and an impartial judge, and therefore well qualified to settle the question at issue between these rival parties; for it is worthy of note that the Pharisees and Herodians were opposite in their opinions, and perhaps agreed in nothing, save in their bitter hatred and base treachery against the guiltless Son of God.

The question proposed for the Master's consideration was the very one that had caused their dissensions, viz.: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" "Cæsar" was a name applied to the Roman emperors,

and so stands as a representative of the government; while "tribute" was the civil poll-tax required by that government of all enrolled in the "census" (Luke ii. 1); so that their question was simply, "Is it right for the Jews to support the Roman government?"

A negative answer would bring upon him the charge of treason against the State, while an affirmative answer would render him liable to the charge of disloyalty to the Church; and to avoid any evasion, such as they had apparently experienced in the answer to their former question, they demanded a categorical answer, "Yes," or "No"—"Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

They evidently thought that they had him effectually entangled, since either horn of the dilemma would answer their purpose. "But he knowing their hypocrisy," and fully comprehending their design, determines to expose them. For this purpose he calls for a "penny"—a Roman coin worth about fif-

teen cents, in which the tribute was paid—and holding it up before them, most probably, so as to direct especial attention to it, “he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?” referring to the name and likeness of the Roman emperor with which it was stamped. Thus addressed, they were compelled to answer, “Cæsar’s;” and so they were made to reply to their own cunning question, as upon a former occasion (Mark x. 2-4); for their rabbis had decided that to accept the coin of any king was virtually to acknowledge his authority, and so, by receiving and using the very coin in which tribute was paid, bearing the “image and superscription” of Cæsar, they thereby acknowledged their allegiance to the Roman government; and so, in accordance with this confession, “Jesus answering, saith unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s.”

Having thus silenced the Pharisees, and apparently decided the question in favor of the

Herodians, who were no doubt well pleased with their supposed victory over their rivals, our Lord turns to them and adds: "Render unto God the things which are God's."

In their eager support of Roman idolatry they had in a large measure lost sight of their obligation to God, so that it was necessary to remind them of it; while the Pharisees, in their intemperate and misguided zeal for the honor of God, had undervalued the importance of civil authority, so that it was necessary to defend it. He thus fairly and fully answers their question, on the one hand maintaining the honor and rights of the Church, and on the other maintaining the power and authority of the State; and so completely foils them in their murderous attempt. His reply was so full of wisdom and skill that "they marveled at him, and held their peace." They could neither gainsay nor deny the far-reaching principle enunciated, and yet at his trial (Luke xxiii. 2), only a few days afterward, we find them



bringing up a false charge based upon this very interview.

It is interesting to note with what unanimity the different Jewish sects conspire against our Lord, whose only crime was his well-founded claim to the Messiahship. They come, each with his own peculiar "hobby," and in turn sustain a humiliating defeat. The priests, the Pharisees, and the Herodians having alike failed to entrap him, "then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection," "neither angel nor spirit." They were the *Materialists* and *Rationalists* of that day, and came for the purpose of ridiculing the doctrine of the resurrection, and at the same time, if possible, of securing some pretext of accusation against our Saviour. With this twofold object in view, they refer to a law (Deut. xxv. 5-10) enacted for the purpose of securing to each tribe and family the inheritance allotted to it, and most probably propose a fictitious case, which they proceed to unfold

in elaborate detail, and conclude by sneeringly asking, "In the resurrection therefore, whose wife shall she be?" But Christ, well aware of their evil design, "answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." He thus attributes their skepticism to ignorance. Like many of the skeptics of the present day, they failed to comprehend the teachings of God's word, and rejected them because they could not bring them down to the low plane of human reason.

After giving his direct and unmistakable testimony in favor of the resurrection, Christ replies to the question of the Sadducees: "When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven." Marriage was ordained to perpetuate the race by counteracting the power of death, but as they "shall die no more" after the resurrection, marriage becomes unnecessary,

and so will be discontinued; or if it be that marriage is but a type of the mystical union between Christ and his Church, the significance of the symbol will then be forever forgotten, because lost in the luster of a glorious fulfillment. Even Moses, whom these adversaries of the Master had just quoted with the hope of entrapping him, taught this sublime doctrine of the resurrection which they so sneeringly rejected; for, in regard to the patriarchs, he had declared that God was still their God, and so they must still exist, for "he is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."

The Sadducees denied the existence of the soul in a future state, as well as the resurrection of the body, and so Christ selects a passage of Scripture directly teaching the one and suggesting the other; for if satisfied as to the immortality of the soul, they would no doubt admit the resurrection of the body; and when he thus gave this divine interpretation of the passage selected, it so com-

mended itself to the judgment of his hearers that "the Sadducees were put to silence," and the "multitude were astonished," while Luke adds that the scribes, exulting over the defeat of their rivals, commended his answer; and, indeed, so much were both parties impressed with it, that "after that they durst not ask him any questions."

This defeat of the Sadducees made another conference of the adversaries of our Lord necessary, since they were more and more determined to put him to death; and that they had thus far found no possible pretext for so doing shows how completely he had exposed their hypocrisy in every effort they had made to entrap him, for if they could have found the slightest pretext for arresting him they would gladly have seized upon it. So another council, composed of hitherto rival factions—Sadducees, Pharisees, and Herodians—now all united in one common purpose, is called, under the leadership of the Pharisees; for, as Matthew tells us, "when the

Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together," for the purpose of forming other plots. We may well imagine that this conference was held with feelings of mingled gladness and regret. The Sadducees felt humiliated and angry, while the Pharisees, regretting the failure to entrap the contemplated victim, at the same time rejoiced over the defeat and confusion of their rivals, and the fact that they would now the more willingly lend their aid to destroy him.

During the progress of this conference a certain scribe, who had heard his answer to the Sadducees, and "perceiving that he had answered them well," came and sought an interview for himself, perhaps with the secret hope of entrapping him by means of his legal knowledge—for he was a lawyer—but more probably for the sake of instruction; for Christ's open, frank, and direct answer to his question indicates an honest, conscientious inquirer. He turns the discussion

upon a point at that time much controverted among the lawyers—viz., “Which is the first commandment of all?” The Talmud reckoning the laws of Moses to be six hundred and thirteen in number, to keep so many was next to impossible, and hence the Jews sought for some “great commandment,” which they might keep in lieu of all the others. What this “first and greatest commandment” is, the lawyer now inquires; and Christ’s reply indicates that the question was not a mere cavil, but an honest inquiry. He quotes language with which the scribe was familiar: “The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord”—an exclamation which every devout Jew made twice a day as the great utterance of the national faith and an earnest protest against the polytheisms and pantheisms of the heathen world; so that, although the mere preface of the law, it was highly important.

Having thus emphasized the unity of the

Godhead, our Saviour proceeds to give a synopsis of man's obligations, and in so doing addresses the lawyer in the language of law, summing up its requirements in one word—"Thou shalt *love*;" for, as Paul says, "love is the fulfilling of the law," or, as Brown suggests, it is "an *all-inclusive* affection, embracing not only every other affection proper to its object, but all that is proper to be *done* to its object; and so, in the case of men to God, is the native well-spring of a voluntary obedience." It is thus "the diamond of the believer's breastplate: the other graces, like the precious stones of nature, shine each with its own peculiar luster; but the diamond is white, and in white all the colors are united; so in love is centered every Christian grace and virtue." In its relation to the divine law love binds man with a two-fold obligation, first as it refers to God, and then as it refers to his fellow-man. In regard to the first the law demands a *sincere*, *fervid*, *intelligent*, and *energetic* love, with

these several characteristics existing *in the highest possible degree*; for, as interpreted by Christ, it requires that "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

This summary of the first table of the Decalogue, comprehending the whole of man's duty to God, the Master declares to be the first commandment, while the second—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—setting forth man's duty to his fellow-man, is like it both in importance and import; and so upon these two combined "hang all the law and the prophets." Together they present a *summary of the moral law, an epitome of the Bible, a synopsis of man's whole duty*—simple, brief, comprehensive, and unchangeable in its very nature. The scribe, being himself well versed in the law, was no doubt deeply impressed with the wisdom and force of Christ's answer, for he said unto him: "Well, Master, thou hast



said the truth." If he was indeed a mere caviler and a base tool for his party, as some have supposed, this answer of our Lord, marked by such superior wisdom and such intimate acquaintance with the deep, underlying principles of the law, produced a wonderful change in his feelings. At any rate, he was evidently far in advance of the generality of the Pharisees both in point of mental discrimination and spiritual discernment, for he readily acknowledges that the divine law, as thus interpreted, is "more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices," infinitely superior to all mere ceremonial observances.

Having thus replied with such superior intelligence and sincerity, Jesus, carefully observing both him and his answer, and pleased with the *spirit* of the one and the *intelligence* of the other, said unto him: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." But whether he ever entered that kingdom, or whether, like so many others,

he paused upon the very threshold of salvation and went down to a dreary destiny of dark despair with the vision of heaven's glory flashing before him and the echo of heaven's music ringing in his ears, we know not. He evidently had a *head* knowledge of the great governing principles of Christ's kingdom, but whether he ever embraced them with his *heart* is not recorded.

The Master had thus successively defeated the priests, the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees in their efforts to entrap him, and had now solved one of the most puzzling problems of the day to the acknowledged satisfaction of a man who was no doubt eminent for his intellectual ability; and so all others rightly judged that they were no match for this wonderful teacher, for "after that no man durst ask him any questions at all."

Having thus effectually silenced his adversaries, Christ himself assumes an aggressive attitude, and completes his victory over

them by asking them, in his turn, difficult and puzzling questions. The "conference" had no doubt abruptly adjourned to hear the discussion between their hated adversary and the eminent lawyer; but while they were in session they had most probably been discussing the characteristics of the true Messiah, and how they might put *this man* to death; and so our Lord follows up their discussion by asking their opinion of the Messiah—"Whose son is he?"—and when they answer "David's," he propounds the puzzling problem, "How then doth David call him Lord?" for how can the *son* be *lord* over his father? The difficulty thus presented finds its only solution in the union of the human and divine natures in Christ—a doctrine which was no doubt overlooked by the scribes, and so accounts for their inability to answer. Nor does Christ solve the problem for them. His object seems to have been to perplex and embarrass them; and so, having thus publicly called attention to

their manifest incapacity to be spiritual guides, he proceeds to warn the "immense crowds, who heard him gladly," against them, holding up to view the baseness of their character and the hypocrisy of their conduct as revealed in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, where we find a withering denunciation of the one and a characteristic portrayal of the other.

In close and touching connection with this denunciation of those grasping hypocrites, who "devoured widows' houses," occurs an incident which is in itself intensely interesting, and is rendered still more so by reason of this connection. While engaged in denouncing the scribes, our Lord had not been indifferent to other things occurring around him; but wearied no doubt with the long labors of that eventful day, in order to rest awhile, he sat down in the outer court of the Temple not far from the treasury, which consisted of thirteen chests "into which the people cast their offerings" (2 Kings xii. 9).

And as he thus "sat over against the treasury he beheld how the people cast money into the treasury," not only the act but the manner—*how* it was done—and the motive prompting it; and from his high throne in heaven he still beholds "*how* people cast money into the treasury." A motley multitude gathered around the treasury, and mingled motives controlled their actions. "Many that were rich cast in much," and in striking contrast with their apparent munificence "there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites," the smallest Jewish coin, together equal to about *two-fifths* of a cent; but in the estimation of the Master, whose omniscient eye read her motive, her offering outweighed all the gold in the treasury, for he estimates man's liberality not by what he gives, but *by what he fails to give*, and so retains for the gratification of his own selfish desires. Calling the attention of his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude, to the conduct of the widow,

he declares that "this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." Being an indigent widow, and, so *doubly* poor, she might not have been expected to make a free-will offering at all, or at any rate might naturally have retained one of her mites, but in the exercise of sincere love and true faith she cast in *both* of them; and so, as measured by her *means* and her *motive*, she gave infinitely more than the rich, who contributed money that they would *never miss*, retaining large sums—not merely to meet their actual wants, but to gratify their selfish and unnecessary desires.

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To the already long record of useful lessons given on that memorable day John adds some important instructions and several interesting incidents omitted by the other evangelists. Among these are the Master's

prophetic words in reference to his death addressed to "certain Greeks" who were Jewish proselytes come up to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover. They had long cherished a desire to see Jesus, and were no doubt greatly gratified to find him as he still sat near the treasury in the court of the Gentiles. In answer to some of their questions he doubtless declares himself to be the true Messiah, and that the hour has well-nigh arrived when his humiliation and suffering shall give place to eternal glory. The prospect of the cruel cross so near at hand seems for a moment to overwhelm his soul with trouble; but realizing that "for this cause he had come," he does not offer the petition that first trembles upon his tongue, "Father, save me from this hour," but that other petition of calm submission to the Divine will: "Father, glorify thy Son." And immediately, in answer to that prayer, "there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it

again." Filled with astonishment, the people were divided in their opinions as to the strange phenomenon, some supposing that it thundered, while others said an angel spoke to him. But Jesus, declaring that it was another divine attestation of his Messiahship, given for the sake of the incredulous people, refers again to his approaching death. This was in direct conflict with their preconceived ideas of the Messiah as inculcated by the scribes, and so they ask an explanation; but, without giving them a direct answer, he withdraws from their presence.

Notwithstanding the fact that he had performed so many notable miracles during his public ministry, and in this one day had given such unmistakable evidence of his Divinity, by so effectually exposing every plot that his cunning adversaries had been able to devise, "yet they believed not on him," thereby fulfilling the prophecy (Isa. vi. 9, 10) uttered long centuries before. But while this inveterate hate and determined opposition



characterized the official Jews as a class, "nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." A sad commentary upon the frailty of human nature! With one last positive affirmation of his Messiahship, and a brief repetition of some of the doctrines and results which naturally cluster around it (John xii. 44-50), with a sad heart, no doubt, and a sorrowful countenance, "Jesus went out and departed from the temple," never again to enter it—for with that act his ministry as a public teacher closed forever; "and as he went out," uttering that awful valedictory: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your

house is left unto you desolate." Something in his manner, or the tone in which he uttered these memorable words, impressed his disciples with the belief that it was a final withdrawal; and yet so strikingly did the prophecy concerning the destruction of the Temple contrast with its apparently substantial character that they felt constrained to call his attention especially to it, and so they say: "Master, see what manner of stones and buildings are here!" Some of the foundation-stones, according to Josephus, were "forty cubits long," while the building itself was "forty-six years" (John ii. 20) in course of erection. Having his attention thus challenged, Jesus calls his disciples to consider the magnificence and apparent stability of the Temple; and as all eyes are thus riveted upon it, he repeats more plainly the prophecy concerning the destruction: "There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." And, improbable as such an occurrence then seemed, the prediction was

fulfilled some forty years afterward when Titus took the city.

We may imagine the little company as they again wend their way toward Bethany, journeying on in silence, the disciples musing upon their Lord's strange words, until they reach a point on Mount Olivet directly overlooking the Temple, the sight of which brings the prediction of the Master before them with renewed vividness, and overwhelms them with doubt and perplexity, constraining them to ask: "Tell us when shall these things be?"

Taking advantage of the twilight seclusion, he pauses, and sitting down for the double purpose of resting after the incessant labors of that busy day and of imparting to his disciples important lessons which they would greatly need in their future work, he proceeds to answer their inquiries; but one question leading to another, and one explanation to another, the various subjects discussed have become so intermingled in the

record that it is perhaps impossible to determine their order or logical connections. He forewarns them of impending dangers, and foretells heavy afflictions that shall befall them, no less than four times repeating the warning words, "Take heed." The conversation, as we find it recorded, is confessedly difficult to interpret, and perhaps the best understanding of it is obtained by giving it a twofold application, regarding the prophecy as having its first and figurative fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem, but hereafter to receive a second and sublimer fulfillment at the end of the world; for although the primary reference is, perhaps, to the judicial vengeance about to be visited upon Jerusalem, yet in a higher and more awful sense our Lord's language refers to judgments, not political but personal, not temporal but eternal. And so he cautions his companions, and through them his followers in all ages and parts of the world, to be vigilant at all times, lest these calamities come

upon them unexpectedly; for he says: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." And still further to impress this important lesson upon them, the Master makes use of several parables in which he strikingly contrasts the blessings accruing from vigilance and care with the disasters resulting to those who fail to exercise them.

In the first of these he represents himself as a nobleman, who, after assigning to each of his servants his appropriate task, leaves them and goes into a "far country," assuring them that the time of his return is uncertain, and therefore it behooves them to be diligent and watchful, "lest coming suddenly" their

master "find them sleeping," with their work unfinished. To this he adds the interesting "parable of the ten virgins," in which, under the figure of an Eastern wedding, he still further illustrates the important lesson just inculcated.

Representing himself as the "bridegroom," and his professed disciples as the "ten virgins," he places the scene at night, at which time marriages in the East were celebrated. According to the uniform custom, the "bridegroom" and his friends proceed to the home of the bride, for the purpose of escorting her and her companions to the house of the bridegroom, where the marriage festivities are to be observed. At some convenient point along the route to be passed over by the bridal party the "virgins" place themselves, to await the coming of the procession, intending to join it, and with the others pass into the festal hall.

Apparently all are equally prepared for the occasion, for all alike have the "lamp"

of a formal Christian profession, and the "oil" of faith, at least to an intellectual degree. But while some have the spirit of Christianity as well as the form, others have only the form, and by their careless conduct show but too plainly that they "deny the power thereof." As some time must elapse before the procession arrives, they all alike betake themselves to sleep—perhaps the sleep of death—some with the sweet consciousness of thorough readiness for the "bridegroom's" arrival at any hour, and some under the soothing sense of false security.

Suddenly the joyous songs of the advancing procession are heard in the distance, and the cry rings out shrill and clear upon the midnight air: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet him." With throbbing hearts the "virgins" all alike prepare to obey, and so "arise and trim their lamps." But while the prudent find their lamps still brightly burning, the "foolish" discover to

their dismay that their wicks are charred, and their lights fast "going out," because their meager supply of "oil" is well-nigh exhausted; and so in agony akin to despair they turn to their companions in the hope of securing that which they should have provided for themselves. Well aware that they have no "works of supererogation," the "wise virgins" give the only advice admissible under the circumstances, and so refer their "foolish" comrades to the oil-merchants, that they may "buy for themselves." But while they were gone at that untimely hour to secure the oil of a consistent Christian life and a personal faith, "the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage;" and in order that the festivities of the occasion might not be interrupted by untimely intrusions, "the door was shut."

Finding it impossible to secure oil at such an hour, the "foolish virgins" soon return; and in the vain hope that their careless



neglect may be overlooked, they knock for admission to the marriage-feast; but to their dismay the bridegroom answers their cry with the soul-crushing words, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not!" As they had been indifferent to his claims, so he is now in turn indifferent to their calls, and they are forever shut out from his presence; not because they were willful hypocrites, but *because they were careless formalists.*

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The Master's stay with his disciples was now nearly at an end, and he was anxious to give them all the instructions he could; so that, although they had already sat a long time in the quiet twilight seclusion, he detains them yet a little longer, while he repeats a parable which he had spoken not long before when they were come nigh to Jerusalem, and before he had made his triumphal entry (Luke xix. 11-28). The parables are not identical, but similar. In the parable of the virgins, as Trench suggests,

patient *waiting* was the prominent idea, while here it is faithful *working*. In the one, "by the fate of the foolish virgins we are warned against negligence and decay in the inner life; in the other, by the doom of the slothful servant, against indolence in our outward vocation and work. The one enforces the need of keeping the heart with all diligence; the other of putting all diligence into our outward service."

In this parable Christ represents himself as a slave owner who intrusts certain sums of money to each of his servants preparatory to taking a long journey. Having furnished them the necessary capital, he expects them, by diligent use and active effort, to increase the amount. Accordingly, as soon as their master is gone, the faithful servants begin their efforts, and are soon rewarded by seeing their original capital doubled. But one wicked and slothful servant, because he had not received as much as the others, but more especially,

perhaps, on account of his natural indolence, "went out and hid his lord's money," making no effort whatever to increase it.

In due time, but unexpectedly, the master returns and calls his servants to give an account of their stewardship. With glad hearts those who had been faithful to their trusts respond, and are rewarded by their master not only with welcome words of commendation, but also with promotion and power. Seeing the others thus recompensed, the slothful servant, with many misgivings of heart and upbraidings of conscience, staggers into his lord's presence, and presenting the money he had received seeks to justify his indolence by rudely attacking his master's character. His reasons for indolence and neglect, as stated by the servant, are turned into an argument against him, for if his master was such a man as he had described there was the greater necessity for his being active and diligent; and so, instead of receiving a reward as the others had done, he

is deservedly punished; but his punishment is administered not because he is wicked, but because he is an "*unprofitable servant*." He is punished not for sins of commission, but *for sins of omission*; just as the tree that is cut down as a "cumberer of the ground" is not the tree that bore bad fruit, but the tree that *bore no fruit*.

This important truth is still further emphasized by the Master in his graphic description of the judgment which the punishment of the unprofitable servant apparently suggests; but in order that the significance of the parables may not be overlooked, the Master gives his disciples their application by holding up the central truth for their consideration. And again, striking the key-note of the lessons he had just spoken, he says: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." And then, as though afraid his warning words might after all fail of their object, he proceeds to emphasize them still further by

sketching the sublime scenes of the judgment, where he represents himself as sitting upon the judgment-seat with the multiplied millions of his creatures assembled before him, examining into their former lives and making their destiny to turn upon sins of *omission* rather than sins of commission—upon what men have *not* done rather than what they have done—for the purpose, no doubt, of impressing upon his followers, in all ages of the world, the great importance of watchful care and earnest diligence in the Christian life.

The twilight shadows had now deepened on the rugged brow of Olivet, or, perhaps, had entirely disappeared in the soft, mellow light of the full moon, ere our Lord concluded these lessons; but having thus forewarned his disciples of the coming danger, and instructed them to make public the words of warning that he had just spoken to them here in private, he resumes his journey to Bethany, where he, doubtless,

enters the peaceful home of Lazarus and his sisters, now doubly dear to him after the incessant labors of that busy and eventful day.

Wednesday, April 5, A.D. 30.

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HAVING, on the preceding day, finished the prophetic part of his mediatorial work on earth, in order that his exhausted physical nature may have some chance to recuperate before he enters upon the still severer ordeal through which he must pass in the exercise of his priestly functions, our Saviour spends the whole of Wednesday and the greater part of Thursday breathing the peaceful atmosphere and enjoying the sacred associations of friendship in the little suburban village of Bethany. Here his friends gather around him for the double purpose of listening to his words of wisdom and of showing him respect and honor. Among others who found his presence a delight was "Simon the leper," whose malady had been most probably healed by the Master, and

whose soul had been regenerated by the Spirit. No doubt he was a man of wealth, and possibly a kinsman of Lazarus and his sisters—at any rate an intimate friend, as we infer from the liberties they took in his house (John xii. 2).

Constrained by his love for our Lord, and as an expression of his gratitude, Simon made a feast in his honor, to which the disciples, and perchance all the kindred spirits of the village, were invited. On that occasion, no doubt, many an interesting truth fell from the lips of him who “spake as never man spake,” of which we have no record whatever; but during the progress of the feast there occurred an exceedingly interesting incident that has been preserved. Mary, the loving sister of Lazarus, who, by reason of her confiding nature and intimate association with Jesus, had probably grasped the true idea of his approaching death, as a last act to prove her love and devotion to him took a box or vase of very



costly perfume, and breaking the seal which kept the essence from evaporating, she "poured it on his head;" and not content with this, she also "anointed his feet and wiped them with her hair" as he reclined at the table according to the Eastern custom. This act, so indicative of a noble mind and a liberal heart, and manifesting such unselfish devotion, was very grateful to our Saviour, who understood its true significance and knew that it had reference to his burial; but its effect upon at least one other of the party was widely different, for it awakened within the wicked heart of Judas Iscariot such covetous desires as led him openly to condemn it; for he says, with well-concealed hypocrisy, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" And "this he said not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the bag bare what was put therein." He thought such a friend of the Master ought to have given the money to meet the necessities of

the little band; and, as their treasurer, he could then easily have appropriated a portion of it to his own use. As it was, it seemed absolutely wasted; and it was a considerable sum, for the perfume was probably worth some forty or fifty dollars; and so the other disciples, carried away with the plausibility of his speech and ignorant of his motives, join with him in the "murmur against her"—not only speaking about her, but probably to her—upbraiding her for her conduct. But Jesus, well knowing that her loving act had been misunderstood and her motives misjudged, rebukes his disciples, at the same time explaining to them the solemn significance of the act; and without in the least undervaluing the claims of the poor, he commends the conduct of Mary in words that have secured for her a monument more lasting than tablets of brass or pillars of marble, for he says, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of

for a memorial of her"—a wonderful prophecy, repeating itself in every age, and proving to every land and nation the omniscience of the prophet; for this simple act of this loving heart is not only remembered and cherished by our Lord, but it has been endowed, as it were, with a self-perpetuating power by which, with a fragrance richer far than the "ointment of spikenard," it spreads itself over the world wherever the Christian religion is known and felt.

This exceedingly interesting event stands in the record as a pleasing parenthesis between the foul plots of Christ's open enemies and the blacker treachery of his false friend.

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Humiliated by their repeated defeats and thirsting for revenge, our Lord's adversaries soon renew their plots for his destruction; for then assembled together the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people unto the palace of the high-priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that

they might take Jesus by subtility and kill him; but they said: "Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

The city was at this time filled with strangers, many of whom had heard Jesus in Galilee and Perea, and regarded him a prophet; and they had manifested their approbation at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem only a few days before, so that the rulers had good cause to dread this vast multitude, numbering, according to Josephus, "some two millions of people," for the least provocation might lead to a national insurrection. They were, no doubt, in great perplexity; and we have no means of determining what their plan would have been had not the base and blackened traitor solved the problem for them.

Stung by his Master's rebuke, which his conscience told him he richly deserved, we may well imagine that Judas finds the company at Simon's house uncongenial, and their

conversation irksome and unpleasant; and so, with the first opportunity that offers, he excuses himself and returns to Jerusalem. On his way, meditating upon the imagined insult he had received, he is filled with anger, and then as his mind recurs to the waste of the ointment he feels afresh the eager longings of a morbid avarice. When suddenly remembering how anxiously the rulers had sought to entrap his Master, with feelings of mingled avarice and revenge he goes "unto the chief priests to betray him unto them." He has no difficulty in gaining admission to their secret conclave when once the object for which he comes is suggested; for "when they heard it they were glad;" nor does he wait long for a reply to his question, "What will ye give me and I will deliver him unto you?" for the "thirty pieces of silver," the paltry price for the accidental killing of a servant (Ex. xxi. 32), were eagerly promised. The bargain being thus closed, "from that time he sought opportunity to

betray him in the absence of the multitude," so as to avoid an uproar, which was, perhaps, one of the conditions made by the rulers.

As the Master sits in Bethany calmly conversing with his friends, his omniscient eye is reading all that occurs in the palace of Caiaphas in Jerusalem; and when it rests upon the base act of the traitor, he makes, perhaps, his first announcement of the precise time when he shall suffer, for he says to those around him, "Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified," as though he had said, "Judas has just performed the act of treason which will culminate in my death day after to-morrow;" an announcement but imperfectly understood by his friends, most probably, else they would have protested against his return to Jerusalem.

We may well imagine that the rulers kept "jubilee" that night, and that Judas, with

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mingled emotions of satisfaction and regret, remains in their company rather than return to Bethany and face the questioning gaze of his intended victim.

### Thursday, April 6, A.D. 30.

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PERHAPS more sad and mournful memories cluster around Thursday, April 6, A.D. 30, than around any day connected with the life-history of our Lord. It is on this day that he bids a final farewell to Bethany and the sacred associations that cluster around it. It is on the evening of this day that he gathers around him his little company of chosen companions for the last time to participate in that festival so strikingly typical of the awful tragedy through which he must so soon pass. It is on the night of this day that he wrestles in such eager earnestness with his dark destiny in the gloomy garden of grief. It is on the night of this day that a false and faithless friend basely betrays him into the hands of his enemies with the sweetest symbol of affection. It is



on the night of this day, when he most needed sympathy and support, that he is so cruelly deserted by the trusted Twelve. It is on the night of this day that, deserted and alone, he falls into the hands of a merciless mob, who arraign him before the high-priest upon a false charge, and heap upon him every imaginable indignity and insult. It is on the night of this day, when his sensitive soul is thus weighed down with growing grief, that he is so basely repudiated and denied by one whom he has so often trusted and so especially honored.

On this day, then, already so memorable in Jewish history as the time "when the passover must be killed," in order that he may once more partake of it with his disciples, "he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat;" and after receiving minute directions as to how they shall find a suitable room in the house of a man who was most probably himself a disciple of the Lord, they go forth,

and find every thing ready, as foretold by their Master.

After making all necessary preparations, Peter and John return to Bethany, where Jesus and the other disciples still remain. In the afternoon they bid adieu to their faithful friends and turn their footsteps again toward Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating the most interesting and important of all the Jewish festivals. This feast had a twofold significance—pointing back to that memorable night when the death-angel had so mercifully *passed over* the blood-stained houses of Israel (Ex. xii. 1-28), and forward, as a beautiful symbol, to the time, now so near at hand, when “Christ, our Passover, should be sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. v. 7). In its preparation the paschal lamb, which was the most significant element of the supper, could only be killed by the priests in the court of the Temple (Deut. xvi. 5-7; 2 Chron. xxxv. 1-11; Lev. xvii. 3-6). There the owner, after it was killed, re-

ceived it and carried it to his house in Jerusalem, where it was roasted whole in an oven with two spits of pomegranate-wood thrust through it, in the form of a *cross*. Thus roasted with fire as an emblem of purification, it was served up with a bitter salad, indicative of the bitterness of the bondage of Egypt. Not fewer than ten nor more than twenty persons were admitted to this sacred solemnity.

The characteristics of the Passover were: (1) The *paschal lamb*, which must be "a male without blemish;" (2) the *unleavened bread*, which was made of wheat, rye, barley, or oats, but generally of the finest wheat-flour; (3) the *bitter herbs*, which were endive, chicory, wild lettuce, or nettles—important articles of food to the ancient Egyptians; (4) the *four cups of wine*, which was no doubt *unfermented*, because the feast took one of its names from the exclusion of leaven and all elements of fermentation, thus symbolizing the purification of the heart (1 Cor. v.

6-8); (5) the *Hallel*, a name contracted from "halleluiah" and given to the service of song, which consisted of the series of Psalms from one hundred and thirteen to one hundred and eighteen. All work ceased early in the afternoon; no ordinary food was allowed after midday, and no uncircumcised person was admitted to the supper. When all was ready, the family gathered around the table, the blessing was asked, and the first cup of wine drank. The bitter herbs were then introduced, and a portion of them eaten. The unleavened bread was next handed around, and then the lamb was placed on the table; but before it was eaten the second cup of wine was drank and the eldest son asked the significance of the service (Ex. xii. 26), to which the father replied, giving its history and import. Then the first part of the *Hallel*, consisting of Psalms one hundred and thirteen and one hundred and fourteen, was sung. After this the lamb was carved and eaten, and the third and fourth cups of

wine were drank in close succession, the whole service being then concluded by singing the second part of the Hallel, consisting of Psalms one hundred and fifteen to one hundred and eighteen, to which reference is perhaps made where it is stated of Christ and his disciples that "they sung a hymn, and went out into the Mount of Olives."

To engage in this interesting and deeply significant service, the Master and his little company of followers now go to Jerusalem to the upper room where Peter and John had previously made all necessary preparations, and about six o'clock in the evening "when the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him;" but before they begin to eat he makes known to them the desire which he had so long and so earnestly entertained of eating this feast with them, perhaps because it was to mark the point of transition between the old economy and the new and the exchange of the Pass-over for the more simple but more signifi-

cant Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. An illustration of the strange perversity of human nature here stands forth in striking contrast with the sacred solemnities of the occasion. Still clinging to their cherished idea that their Master was about to establish a temporal kingdom, and envious perhaps of Peter and John because of the prominence that had been given them in the preparation of the supper, as the disciples were about to take their places at the table "there was a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest" and entitled to the most honorable position at the table and in the supposed kingdom about to be established. Mildly rebuking them, Jesus explains to them that his kingdom is not to be like those of the world, but that *in it honor is to be measured by humility*; and then, after assuring them that their expectations, although misdirected, shall not be disappointed, but that in due time they shall have a position of royalty and "sit upon thrones," he pro-

ceeds to illustrate his lesson of humility by himself rising from the table, girding himself with a towel like a servant, and in turn washing the feet of each disciple—thereby teaching them that, as “the servant is not greater than his lord,” in imitation of his example they are to act toward each other, ever willing to perform the very humblest service. Peter, misapprehending the import of his Master’s conduct, at first remonstrates, and then, in his impulsive nature swinging to the opposite extreme, furnishes our Lord with the opportunity of gently hinting to the little company the base treachery of one of their number. Again seating himself at the table, he declares more plainly that one of them has proved a traitor; and how much it cost him to make this statement we learn from John, who says that he was “troubled in spirit,” perhaps visibly overcome with emotion; and so his sympathetic disciples were also “exceeding sorrowful,” and as they “looked upon one another, doubting

of whom he spoke," they "began every one to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" In the Greek the expression is negative in form, and is equivalent to "It is not I, is it?" Astonished beyond measure at the declaration of their Master, each disciple was desirous of excusing himself, but at the same time was unwilling to accuse another. If they had any suspicions in regard to Judas they did not venture even to hint them; but it is probable that he had so carefully concealed his true character that in the estimation of his fellow-disciples he was above suspicion. Unable longer to bear the suspense, Peter, conscious of his own integrity, from his position on the opposite side of the table beckons to John, who occupies his favorite place next to the Master, to ask the name of the guilty party, and without replying directly Jesus privately points out the traitor to John by means of a sign. The amazement and inquiry still continuing, fearing that his silence may betray him, Judas also asks, "Is



it I?" to which Jesus no doubt replies by a nod or some sign, and at the same time points him out to the others as the traitor by declaring that "it is one of the twelve, that dipped with me in the dish," the language indicating that Judas occupied a position very near to the Master, as several dishes were no doubt necessary to accommodate them all.

Having thus revealed the treachery of Judas, Jesus declares that while it will but lead to the fulfillment of the eternal purposes of God, his crime is inexcusable, inasmuch as his free agency is wholly untouched. Stung with shame and mortification at this exposure of his guilt, Judas yields himself up to the power of Satan, and seeks the first opportunity for withdrawing from company which he now finds so uncongenial, while Christ, reading his secret thoughts, and as if impatient to be relieved of his presence, bids him go and carry his fiendish purpose into fatal execution. The other disciples

heard the words of Jesus addressed to the traitor, and noted his departure; but although his treachery had been made known to them, little did they suppose that it was so near its consummation, for they thought that as the treasurer he had only been sent out to make some necessary purchases for the feast, or that he had been dispatched upon some errand of charity, for "no man at the table knew for what intent Jesus spake unto him;" and as the base traitor goes out from the presence of his companions, the darkness of "night" envelops the earth, and the deeper darkness of eternal death seizes upon his treacherous soul.

As soon as Judas is gone the other disciples no doubt begin to comment upon his treachery, which causes the Master to declare that he will not be the only one to prove unfaithful. He well knew that on account of the erroneous opinions they had formed in regard to his kingdom they would be sadly disappointed by what was

about to occur, and so he says, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night;" for he was well aware that Judas was even at that moment on his way to the "rulers," and that the mob would ere long come upon them in Gethsemane. But Peter, always impetuous, and little understanding his own heart, said unto him, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I," his language intimating the impossibility of *all* the disciples acting so base a part, but even if an event so improbable should occur he feels sure of his own fidelity; and so, although giving evidence of his ardent love for his Master, he betrays great ignorance of his own heart. He assumes a superiority over his fellow-disciples, which our Saviour no doubt intended to rebuke when, on a subsequent occasion, he asked him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John xxi. 15). Well knowing the danger to which his self-confidence exposed his impulsive friend, Jesus warns him of Satan's desire to gain

power over him, such as he once possessed over Job, but tells him that he has prayed for him, so that, although he shall fall before the power of temptation, yet he shall not be utterly overcome. Conscious of his honest love, and distressed that his Master should entertain such an opinion of him, Peter reaffirms his love and fidelity, declaring his readiness to "lay down his life" for the sake of his friend. Again the warning words fall upon his ear, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me," and again "he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." Peter, although perhaps more emphatic in his declarations of affection and fidelity, was only spokesman for the others, for "likewise also said they all," and though they did not all *deny* him, they *forsook* him, like cowards, in the hour of danger, their self-confidence and subsequent conduct strikingly illustrating the words of Solomon, "When

pride cometh, then cometh shame" (Prov. xi. 2).

After a pause the Master resumes his words of warning, declaring to his astonished disciples that their future would be very different from the past. They would now have need of both "purse and script," and, in a figurative sense, also of the "sword," for the prophecy of Isaiah, "He was reckoned among the transgressors," was fast nearing its fulfillment; and, in fact, so near at hand does his approaching glory seem that he speaks of it as if already accomplished—"Now is the Son of man glorified;" and then, as if suddenly remembering that that which will bring glory and gladness to him will bring separation and sorrow to them, he gently discloses to them the fact that he is about to leave them, and for their mutual comfort and help, in the midst of their difficulties and dangers, he gives them a farewell message, "a new commandment," that "ye love one another as I have loved

you;" and this they were to do not only for their own good, but for his glory, for "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This love for each other would be a sort of compensation for his absence, and also a badge by which they were to be known as his followers.

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This disclosure of his early departure from their midst, together with the revelation of the treachery of one of their number, filled the little band with deepest sorrow, so that the heavy hearts and sad countenances in that "upper room" presented a striking contrast to the joyous scenes throughout the city on that Passover night, around which clustered so many pleasant memories. To counteract these sorrowful feelings the Master kindly lifts their thoughts from the gloomy present to the glorious future, and gently whispers: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many man-

sions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you, . . . and will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Thus he assures them that their separation, although inevitable, shall not be final, and that it shall eventuate in their eternal good. He here enters, as it were, the very "holy of holies" of Divine truth, and reveals to his disciples those sublime teachings contained in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of John, which form so fitting a sequel to the sacred and sublime scenes witnessed in that "upper room." No longer restrained by the presence of the traitor, our Lord pours out the love of a full heart in words of sweetest significance and most gracious import, while the little band of sorrowing disciples listen with eager and wondering attention, the circumstances of the occasion serving to impress them indelibly upon each mind and heart. Thus they linger around the table until a late hour of the night, and some time during

the Passover supper, perhaps near its close, our Lord changes both the *name* and *nature* of the feast. Its significance, so far as it refers to himself, is changed from a prophetic rite to a commemorative ordinance. The supper was now virtually finished. Homage had been paid to the past, and the Passover, the symbol of the theocracy, had been duly recognized and observed; but as Jesus was about to leave his disciples, knowing that they would need some emblem, some common bond which should outwardly link them together and to their common Master, he proceeds to institute a rite, simple in its grandeur and grand in its simplicity, which should henceforth be honored as the symbol of the new dispensation. For this purpose "he took bread"—one of the unleavened cakes provided for the Passover feast; and "wine"—the "grace cup" that stood ready to be drunk at the conclusion of the feast; and out of these two simple elements instituted a new feast, typifying his broken body



and shed blood; and as the elements were the same in both, the two feasts are seen to be of like import, although the one was designed to supersede the other. There was no doubt something in his manner as he took the bread that attracted the especial attention of the disciples, and impressed them with the solemn significance of the act. Having thus taken the bread, "he blessed and brake it, and gave it to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." The breaking of the bread was itself a significant act, referring to his death, and, as if to demonstrate its importance, it is recorded in all four of the accounts of the institution of the ordinance. That the bread simply represents the body of Christ is so evidently the meaning of the language that it would require no notice whatever were it not for the absurd and monstrous doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation, built upon a perversion of our Lord's language by both the Roman and Lutheran Churches. For the

use of similar metaphors, see Gen. xli. 26; Ezek. xxxvii. 11; Luke viii. 11; Matt. xiii. 38; 1 Cor. x. 4; Gal. iv. 24; Rev. i. 20. There was a distinct thanksgiving for the bread and wine respectively in the Jewish feast, and to this custom Christ conforms, for "he took also the cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;" and Mark records the fact that "they all drank of it," and so both the command and the recorded fact stand in strange and striking contrast to the custom of Rome in withholding the cup from the people. As the "bread" represents Christ's broken body, so the "wine" represents his shed blood, the two together typifying his sufferings and death, and so forming a commemorative ordinance, its object and import being set forth in his own words: "This do in remembrance of me, for as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

This feast, then, like the Passover, has a

twofold significance, designed to call the mind away from the present and carry it back amid the sacred scenes of the past, where he was "wounded for our transgressions," or forward to the sublimer scenes of the future, when he "shall come again, surrounded by angels, and clothed with power and glory." But the feast is not only one of *commemoration*—it is also one of *confession*, because the participant thus publicly confesses a sense of his own sinfulness and at the same time his faith in the atoning merits of Christ. It is likewise a feast of *communion* (1 Cor. x. 16), where believers sit together as members of one family, in sweet and intimate fellowship with each other and with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But the name by which the feast is now commonly designated is not found in the Bible at all. It is called a "sacrament," a name derived from a Latin term used to denote the oath of allegiance which the subject took to support the sovereign, and so we have it set

forth as a feast of *consecration*, in which the believer pledges eternal fidelity to his Master.

Having established this ordinance, so simple and yet so significant, upon the ruins of the old Passover, giving to the bread and wine of the former feast a new meaning and a sweet and solemn import, as the mute memorials of his death, our Lord lingers around the table with his disciples, amid the sacred scenes of that "upper room," yearning over them as he speaks to them his words of fond farewell, and offering in their behalf that sublime priestly prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, until it was no doubt near midnight, when they closed the solemn service by singing the customary Hallel, consisting of Psalms cxv. to cxviii. "When they had sung a hymn they went out unto the Mount of Olives," where was witnessed the saddest scene in all human history, sadder even, in some respects, and more mysterious, than the bloody tragedy of the cross.

Long years before his advent into the

world our Lord was characterized by the prophet as "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and his life fulfilled this prophecy to the very letter. Tradition says he often wept, but was never known to smile. But the scene in Gethsemane marks the culmination of his anguish, the sublime climax of his sufferings. It was there he "trod the wine-press" alone, and bore in solitary sorrow the concentrated guilt of a wicked world. It was there his pure soul was brought into such close contact with the revolting spectacle of sin that he realized the withdrawal of his Father's presence in all of its unutterable bitterness.

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Well may the human soul contemplate Gethsemane with wonder and reverential awe, for there was fought and won the battle that determined its destiny. There Satan, who had fled in manifest defeat from the trial in the wilderness, renews the attack with all the cruel determination of a last ef-

fort, and is again vanquished; for from that strange, mysterious scene of unearthly sorrow our Lord comes forth with all the calm dignity of a conscious conqueror. The only clew to the sacred and solemn secrets of Gethsemane is to be found in the fact that "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." In no other way can our Lord's sufferings be explained, or the strange problem of his bitter anguish be solved.

The place where this severe struggle with the powers of darkness occurred was near the foot of the west slope of the Mount of Olives, about half a mile from the walls of Jerusalem, the traditional site being "at the junction of the main roadway from Bethany and a narrow path that crosses the summit of the mountain." John calls it a garden, and it was known as Gethsemane, or "oil-press," perhaps from a press that stood near by which was used to make olive-oil from the fruit of the numerous olive-trees

with which the mount abounded. To this place, then, rendered immortal by reason of the holy memories that cluster around it, the Master and his disciples come, near the lone hour of midnight, while the mellow light of the full moon reveals each familiar object. Near the entrance to the garden he leaves eight of his disciples with the assurance that he retires from them for the purpose of prayer, as he had no doubt often done before in this same place (John xviii. 2). He desires that his great agony may be as private as possible; and yet, as if feeling the need of human sympathy in this dark and trying hour, "he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John," the three favored disciples, who had witnessed the exhibition of his greatness (Mark v. 37) and of his glory (Mark ix. 2), and were now the chosen witnesses of his grief. No sooner do the friendly shadows of the olive-trees screen him from the curious gaze of his companions than he begins to be "sore amazed and very heavy,"

appalled and oppressed by the crushing weight of a world's guilt, by his burden of sorrow for the sins of men and of responsibility for their deliverance; and, as if seeking sympathy, he turns to the chosen three and "saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death," or, as paraphrased by Brown: "I feel as if nature would sink under this load, as if life were ebbing out and death coming before its time;" and then, as though their very presence did him good, he says, "Tarry ye here and watch with me." But there was, as it were, a sort of holy of holies to this scene of sorrow, into which even the most familiar friend could not intrude—a point where he must "tread the wine-press alone" (Isa. lxiii. 3), and bear without aid or sympathy the crushing burden of the world's guilt; and so "he went forward a little, . . . about a stone's cast"—in sight and perhaps in hearing of the three, so that they could be competent witnesses, able to give credible testimony in regard to the



agony of their Lord. Being thus removed from the immediate presence of his disciples, he knelt down, and prostrating himself in the most humble attitude, with the most intense earnestness of soul he prayed that if it were possible the bitter cup of suffering and death might pass from him; but if it had passed *from* him it would have passed *to* guilty man in all its unfathomable bitterness. Had he given up the work of redemption, he could have been instantly relieved of his agony (Matt. xxvi. 53); but knowing that such relief would seal eternal ruin upon the human race, and that their rescue was in accordance with the eternal purposes of the Father, he yields a willing submission, and concludes his prayer with, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt." According to Brown, these words of our Lord "imply that this cup, *in itself*, was so revolting to him that only its being the Father's will would induce him to taste it. The struggle is not between a reluctant and com-

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pliant will, but between two views of one event—an *abstract* and a *relative* view—in the one of which it was *revolting*, in the other *welcome*.”

Our Lord's grief seems to have come upon him, as it were, by *surges*; and so, having gained a momentary relief by this submission of his soul to the Divine will, he returns to the three disciples, perhaps for the purpose of receiving that sympathy for which he had so touchingly asked; for, as one has beautifully said, “although he entered a cloud, from the bosom of which we hear only the broken cries of the struggle, yet as near as man can come he entreats him to approach.” But “when he cometh, he findeth them asleep”—not watching for his return and ready to welcome him with words of solace and sympathy, and yet not indifferent and unsympathetic, for their sleep was itself an attestation of their intense interest in and sympathy for him, having been produced by their sorrow, as Luke tells us; and sleep, as physicians assure us, is a fre-

quent symptom of grief, as shown in the last hours of criminals.

Coming to the sleeping disciples, our Lord addresses Peter as the representative of the others, and at the same time, no doubt, with reference to his arrogant and self-confident claims to superior fidelity; and so he asks, seemingly with some surprise: "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch with me one hour?" The intention seems to be to give Peter another warning, as though he had asked: "Has thy boasted fidelity vanished so soon? If thou canst not watch one hour, how canst thou endure the agony of many hours?" Knowing their need of vigilance and precaution, he repeats the warning words: "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Some are *led* into temptation, while others *enter* into it of their own accord; and he well knew that his disciples, by reason of their self-confidence, were in great danger of doing this, especially Peter, who, notwithstanding his Master's warning, actual-

ly did that very night voluntarily enter into temptation when he made his appearance in the midst of our Lord's enemies. But the Master well knew that the sleep of his disciples was not caused by indifference, but by their intense interest and love for him; and so he hastens to soften the apparent harshness of his language by framing an excuse for them as they stand before him confused and self-condemned, for he says, "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." *He knew the weakness of the flesh from his own actual experience*, and perhaps felt it most keenly at that very moment as the *surge* of grief again began to rise higher and higher; and so, in order to sustain his sinking soul, "again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words." Luke tells us that his grief was so great that "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him;" but this heavenly messenger was not sent to minister *light* or *comfort*, but purely to sustain and brace up sinking nature for a yet

hotter and fiercer struggle, for "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops [literally "clots"] of blood falling down to the ground." Matthew gives us the words of this second prayer: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, thy will be done;" and so being again strengthened by the subtle power of prayer, he returns to his friends and finds them "asleep again, for their eyes were heavy," and their hearts being burdened, an irresistible drowsiness overcame them. Perhaps without awaking them at all, he turns sorrowfully away from those from whom he had hoped to receive solace and sympathy, and "prayed the third time, saying the same words," not as a "vain repetition," but in the intense earnestness of an anxious importunity.

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This scene of suffering presents unfathomable mysteries. Brown characterizes it as "*shuddering nature and indomitable will strug-*

gling together," the one conquering the other through the secret but sublime influence of prayer; and so as the third "thy will be done" falls from the lips of our Lord an invincible determination takes possession of his soul, and he goes forth to meet his fate with the calm dignity of a conscious conqueror. With this settled purpose, he returns again to his disciples, and finding them still sleeping he asks with apparent surprise, "Do ye sleep on and take your rest?" and immediately adds: "It is enough, the hour is come. Behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." The dark hour to which he had so long looked forward has at last come, but he is now fully prepared for it. The prophecies concerning him are being accomplished through the treachery of a false friend, and for this he is also ready; and so he says to his disciples, "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand," perhaps at that moment appearing in the distance, for while our Lord in that quiet

upper room was entering the *sanctum sanctorum* of the high mysteries of grace, and unfolding its treasures to his wondering disciples, the treacherous Judas had stolen away to the palace of the high-priest, and was busily engaged in arranging the details for his Master's arrest; and so, scarcely had the echoes of the struggle in Gethsemane died upon the midnight air, and the returning angel (Luke xxii. 43) borne the news of triumph to the skies, ere he appeared upon the scene surrounded by the representatives of the Jewish Church, in the midst of which all is now bustle and excitement. The traitor basely abuses the knowledge he has obtained through his intimate association with his intended victim. He well knows where to find him, either from some remark made at the supper-table or from his knowledge of his Master's habits, for John tells us that "Judas, also, which betrayed him, knew the place, for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." Jesus also knew that the trai-

tor would expect to find him amid those familiar scenes, and so, instead of seeking to avoid him, he goes forth to meet him, in fulfillment of his own prophetic words: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself."

The traitor was surnamed "Iscariot" probably because he was a native of Kerioth, a town of Judea; and, if so, his case was exceptional, as all the other disciples were from Galilee (Acts ii. 7); or he may have been so designated because he carried "the bag," the word "*scartea*" meaning a "leathern apron," and so the term was equivalent to "Judas with the apron," or "Judas the treasurer." Of his life prior to his admission among the Twelve we know absolutely nothing. He is designated as "one of the twelve" by all the evangelists whenever allusion is made to his treacherous act, as if to brand him with eternal infamy; but it is worthy of note that this is the last time he is so mentioned (Acts i. 25). Henceforth he



is separated from them forever. Acting as leader and guide, he now comes "with a great multitude," headed by a band of men and officers," who were urged forward by the malicious "chief priests and captains of the temple and elders," but mostly composed of the rabble, who were drawn together by curiosity and incited to cruelty by the infuriated leaders—all classes and conditions thus conspiring against the guiltless Son of God. The soldiers were armed with swords, while the rabble crowd carried sticks and clubs; and, although the moon was at its full, they take the precaution of providing lanterns and torches, lest perchance their intended victim may have concealed himself somewhere in the dark ravine, and lest they should make a mistake and arrest the wrong man, which Judas was anxious to avoid for fear of losing his reward, and which the rulers were also anxious to prevent for fear of losing their intended victim and contemplated revenge. They had taken another

precaution, agreeing among themselves upon a sign by which he might be unmistakably identified, for "he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him and hold him fast." A kiss was most probably the usual salutation of the disciples to their Master, and so would attract no special attention from any one not aware of the object for which it was given; but Judas, in the madness of his great wickedness, seems to have forgotten his Master's miraculous power and unequalled skill in thwarting the purposes of his enemies upon former occasions. From his intimate association with him in the past he easily recognizes him as the light of the moon falls upon the familiar features; and, eager no doubt to accomplish his mission and secure his reward, "as soon as he is come he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master, and kissed him" with tenderness—or fervor, as the Greek implies—thus in the very act of treachery bear-

ing testimony to the innocence of his victim. Against this salutation of hypocrisy our Lord at first gently remonstrates: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" and then boldly challenges such conduct: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" as though he had said, "Dare you presume to imprint upon the foulest act of treason the mark of tenderest affection?" Having received this withering rebuke, Judas slinks back into the darkness, and Jesus steps forth to meet his assailants with the bold question, "Whom seek ye?" and then assures them that he himself is the object of their search, thus a second time most clearly demonstrating his own prophetic words: "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself;" for so awed were his enemies by his manner and his words that "they went backward and fell to the ground" completely powerless; and not until a second question from our Lord aroused the soldiers to the necessity of obeying their orders did they attempt

to arrest him. But by the time the second question was asked, having somewhat recovered from their surprise and alarm, and seeing that he did not intend to offer resistance "they laid their hands on him, and took him;" and as they did so, Peter, always impulsive, but truly loyal to his Master, "having a sword drew it, and smote the high-priest's servant, and cut off his right-ear." Gently rebuking his impulsive disciple, Jesus touched the ear of the wounded servant and healed it, thus performing his last miracle for the benefit of an enemy; and then turning to his assailants he challenges the rude and unreasonable manner in which they come to arrest him: "Are ye come out as against a thief or a robber, with swords and with staves to take me?" He thus expresses his sense of the indignity and insult they offer him, and then reminds them of the many favorable opportunities for quietly apprehending him they had allowed to pass unimproved, for he says, "I was daily with you

in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." They had vainly sought an excuse for doing so, and hence this reminder of their repeated defeats must have been cutting in the extreme, and no doubt exasperated them to the last degree. Through sheer cowardice they had allowed the most favorable opportunities for arresting him pass away, and now, as a further proof of their cowardice, they had come out against their unarmed and unresisting victim with an armed multitude, and even went so far in their cowardice and cruelty as to "bind him" (John xviii. 12); but he voluntarily yields himself into their power (Matt. xxvi. 53), because "the Scriptures must be fulfilled."

Notwithstanding their indignation against Judas, and their earnest protestations of fidelity to their Master, no sooner did the disciples see him surrender himself unresistingly into the hands of his enemies than "they all forsook him and fled," and thus fulfilled the prediction which Jesus had made

concerning them. Like Peter, they would all no doubt have willingly fought for their Master, but they were not prepared for this voluntary surrender and submission to his enemies, and their flight was caused, perhaps, not so much by cowardice as by bitter disappointment at seeing their fond hopes and bright dreams of an earthly kingdom thus suddenly destroyed, and a sort of disgust that one possessed of such miraculous power as he had so often shown had not used it on this occasion to thwart the purposes of his enemies.

Here Mark introduces an incident that is not found in any of the other records, and it has been conjectured with considerable probability that the "young man" referred to was Mark himself, and if so he seems to have adopted John's delicate style of self-allusion, for he says, "There followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body." Lodging somewhere in the vicinity of Gethsemane, he was

aroused from his slumbers by the noisy multitude, and his curiosity getting the better of his prudence, without waiting to dress himself fully, he hastily throws around himself a sheet or loose cloth, instead of the outer garment usually worn. Finding Jesus, with whom he was no doubt well acquainted, under arrest, he follows the crowd to see what will become of him, but when the attendants of the chief priests, supposing him to be one of the disciples, attempted to arrest him, "he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked," easily escaping from their grasp on account of the manner in which he was dressed.

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Forsaken and alone, Jesus is now left in the hands of the merciless mob, who, holding him bound as a prisoner, proceed with him first to "Annas" (John xviii. 13), who was high-priest by hereditary right, and father-in-law of Caiaphas, "which was the high-priest that same year" by Roman appoint-

ment. Naturally the Jews carried their prisoner to the man upon whom they looked as rightful high-priest, but he, recognizing Roman authority in the appointment of his son-in-law, sent them at once to Caiaphas (John xviii. 24), to whom reference is ever afterward made in the process of the trial. Caiaphas was the man who had first instigated the Jews against Jesus (John xi. 49, 50), and was no doubt greatly rejoiced to find him now a helpless prisoner in the hands of his emissaries, and so he hurriedly calls together the Sanhedrim, or supreme court of the nation, by which it was ordained that the Messiah should be condemned (Mark viii. 31).

Recovering from their sudden surprise and fear, two of the disciples follow the crowd, with mingled feelings of love for their Master and curiosity to see what was to become of him. One of these was John, who, being "known unto the high-priest, went in with Jesus into the palace." The other was the



impulsive Peter, who, being more timid, "followed afar off," manifesting even then a *denying spirit*; and so fearing to become the companion of his Master he lost the strengthening influence of his presence. His conduct manifests a severe struggle between his curiosity (Matt. xxvi. 58) and his cowardice, but the former gradually gaining the ascendancy, he follows on to the very door of the palace. There he pauses for want of courage to enter, or because the porter refused to admit a stranger, and so "then went out that other disciple which was known of the high-priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter;" but instead of accompanying John into the presence of his Master, he tarries in the outer court, where "the servants and officers stood, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold." It was in the early spring, some hours before day, and the air was cool and chilly, so the attendants of the high-priest gathered around the fire to

warm themselves, "and Peter stood with them and warmed himself," thus "entering into temptation" by voluntarily placing himself among the enemies of his Master.

Friday, April 7, A.D. 30.

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THE crowd, with their prisoner, reached the high-priest's palace not far from midnight, so that at that late hour it would be difficult to collect the Sanhedrim; but so anxious is the malicious Caiaphas to secure the condemnation of the hated prisoner that he hastily sends couriers to the more zealous members of the court, caring only to secure a "quorum." While they are assembling to join those who were already present, and had aided in the apprehension of Jesus, he conducts a sort of informal, preliminary examination (John xviii. 19-23), in the hope of securing some accusation against our Lord, and so he asks him "of his disciples and of his doctrine;" but the prisoner, with the utmost prudence, simply refers him to his public ministry, which was sufficiently well

known to make a formal statement upon the present occasion unnecessary. Again disappointed, their rage is ungovernable, and so "one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand," the beginning of that series of indignities and insults which, unchallenged and unrebuked—nay, perhaps encouraged by the very man whose duty it was to protect the prisoner—have rendered that night memorable as one of the darkest in all human history.

The question of the high-priest put to Christ in regard to his "disciples" was perhaps overheard by the servants in the outer court, and led to the accusation of Peter as one of them; for "as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high-priest, and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." She was "the damsel who kept the door," as John tells us, who had admitted Peter at the request of John but a few min-

utes before, so that she could easily have recognized and identified him; but, as the Master had predicted, "he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not." He repudiates his Lord's acquaintance, and seeks to pass himself off as one of the numerous visitors to the Passover feast; but feeling uncomfortable in the presence of the servants after this accusation, his cowardice for the time getting the better of his curiosity, "he went out into the porch," where he is again recognized and accused; for the other servants overhearing the remark of the portress, take it up, and after discussing it among themselves, perhaps for the purpose of settling the question, they ask him, "Art not thou also one of his disciples?" But "again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man," hoping no doubt by such emphasis to force them to believe him; and for a time it would seem his object was at least partially secured. All that Peter did or said was witnessed by his Master as he sat in the council chamber,

which overlooked the open court, or "palace," where the attendants were assembled; and, although he had foreseen it all, such base conduct could not fail to drive a dagger to his suffering soul now so keenly sensitive.

Meanwhile the members of the Sanhedrim drop in one by one, until a sufficient number having arrived they begin the sham trial; and well aware that they can find no true witness against the prisoner, "they sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death," which they had already determined to do by *prejudging* the case; and so their pretentious trial was a mere *farce*, and the execution of their sentence a *foul murder*! It was the duty of this court to punish false witnesses, and yet here we find it inviting and encouraging perjury in order to gratify an insatiate prejudice. But while "many bare false witness against him," the difficulty was in securing consistent testimony, for "their witness agreed not together;" and so they could not find even a *false*

*charge upon which they could bring him before Pilate with any hope of success in their murderous effort, for their own law required for conviction the concurrent testimony of two witnesses (Num. xxxv. 30; Deut. xvii. 6). For three long years these Jewish rulers had diligently and anxiously sought for a charge upon which our Lord might be arraigned, and yet, after having arrested him without an indictment, they cannot secure even consistent false witness against him! After repeated efforts, "at the last came two, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." He had not said that he would destroy the temple, but that if they destroyed it he could rebuild it (John ii. 19-22); and his reference was not to the material temple at all, but to his own death and resurrection, which they very well knew, as proved by their appeal to Pilate: "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again"*

(Matt. xxvii. 63), a declaration which can nowhere be found among Christ's *public* teachings except upon the occasion referred to; and that occasion was away back at the very beginning of his ministry, while the accusation itself was based upon one solitary speech of only a few words. Although his public ministry extended over a period of three years, and was filled with utterances much bolder and more extended, yet this was the only pretext for an accusation they could find, and even in reference to it the two could not agree. But even if their testimony had been true, *their view of Christ* ought to have excluded it from the serious consideration of a court of justice, for then it would have been, after all, but the empty words of a boastful impostor.

Exasperated to the last degree by these repeated failures to convict the prisoner under the guise of law, Caiaphas, with manifest anger and shame, forgetting the dignity of his official position, left his presidential



chair, and "stood up in the midst" of the court, and "asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?" There had been no occasion to answer testimony so evidently self-contradictory; and if there had been, he well knew that it was useless to do so (Luke xxii. 67, 68).

Caiaphas, well aware that the court had failed to find an indictment, seeks to draw from his prisoner some remark upon which he may base an accusation; but in this he also failed, for "Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing." Greatly irritated by this persistent silence, as well as by his own repeated failures, and determined upon his death, either by fair means or foul, he next attempts to force the prisoner to convict himself, and for this purpose he puts him on oath—"I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." If he answers in the affirmative, they will accuse him of *blasphemy*; if in

the negative, of *imposition*. Under such circumstances, and in obedience to the law (Lev. v. 1), our Lord unhesitatingly answers, not only asserting his Messiahship in the presence of the highest council of his own nation, but giving them a graphic picture of another *judgment scene*, in which the present parties will be transposed, thus claiming to be not only their long-promised Messiah, but also their future and final Judge. He stands before them apparently a helpless prisoner. "Nevertheless," he says, a time is coming when "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right-hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," in vivid and striking contrast to his present humble and seemingly helpless condition. This declaration was even more favorable for the execution of his purpose than the crafty Caiaphas had dared to hope; and so, although really rejoiced, he affects great surprise and indignation, as an evidence of which he "rent his clothes," although the law forbade him to do

it (Lev. xxi. 10), and turning to the court, he "saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy." Christ's words were blasphemy unless he were indeed the Messiah, and that he was not (?) the court had already *predetermined*—in fact, Caiaphas long before this had counseled both Sadducees and Pharisees to lay aside their rivalry and unite against Jesus, and had gone so far as to assure them that, it being for the public good, it was no harm to destroy him, even if he were innocent (John xi. 47-53).

The conviction of the prisoner was thus a foregone conclusion, and so the whole trial was an outrageous farce; for even the tribunal that condemned him was not a legal court, but simply a *self-constituted* "committee of public safety," as Geikie suggests—something similar to the "vigilance committees" of our own day, and their proceedings from beginning to end were irregular and illegal. Every possible opportunity was given by the law to establish the innocence of the

accused; and, in fact, the axiom upon which the court was based was that "the Sanhedrim was to save, not to destroy, life;" but in the sham trial of Jesus all these merciful provisions were wholly disregarded, or rather were absolutely reversed, the manifest purpose of the tribunal being to establish a verdict upon which they had already agreed. And so, when the cunning high-priest, quivering with affected rage, but real joy, eagerly asks the opinion of his colleagues, "they all condemned him to be guilty of death," and thus the verdict is apparently unanimous; but as we learn from Luke (xxiii. 50, 51) and John (xix. 39), there was at least one, and perhaps two, dissenting *hearts* in the Sanhedrim, but it is probable that neither Joseph nor Nicodemus was present upon this occasion.

The result was most satisfactory to the enemies of our Lord, for they could now accuse him before Pilate as a State criminal, guilty of making claims hostile to the imperial

rights of Cæsar. But the verdict just rendered needs the confirmation of a fuller meeting of the Sanhedrim; and so, placing the prisoner in custody of the rough temple police, the jubilant judges retire to congratulate each other upon their success, or to snatch an hour or two of sleep before the re-assembling of the court in the early morning.

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Peter, having in the meantime somewhat recovered from his momentary alarm, and driven in by the chilly night air, returns to the fire, and true to his impulsive nature so far forgets himself as to engage in conversation with the servants in regard to the fate of the prisoner, and by so doing confirms them in their belief that he is indeed one of the disciples; for "about the space of one hour after" his second denial, "they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean." Thus every thing tended to identify him as a disciple of the prisoner. He was recognized

by the portress as the friend of John, who was known to be a disciple, and also by a kinsman of the wounded Malchus, who saw him in Gethsemane when he raised his sword in defense of the prisoner; and now he was readily detected as a Galilean by the peculiarities of his speech, which was considered very barbarous and corrupt by the people of Judea; and so, thus hopelessly entangled, he becomes more alarmed than ever lest he should be condemned along with his Master, and losing all self-control, "he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak." And ere the echo of the fearful imprecations dies away, the shrill, clear note of a crowing cock rings out in the stillness of the night, reminding the sinning disciple of his arrogant claims of changeless fidelity, and of his Master's words of warning; and so, instinctively glancing toward him as he stands surrounded by his brutal guards, he meets the gaze of those familiar eyes turned upon him, full of

wounded love and severe approach. That look went like a dagger to his soul, overwhelming him with shame and sorrow; and so, to conceal his overpowering emotions, "he went out and wept bitterly," proving the sincerity of his repentance by withdrawing from the scene of temptation.

But the agony of Peter on account of his base conduct was scarcely greater than that of his Master, to whose suffering soul it brought greater grief perhaps than all the indignities and insults that had been inflicted upon him by his brutal custodians; for, actuated by personal dislike, and encouraged by the example of their "rulers," they had vied with each other in devising plans of cruelty and insult. Having "blindfolded" him, some "struck him with the palm of their hands," while others "spit in his face," and all "mocked him," sneeringly saying, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee?" and "many other things blasphemously spake they against him," the

above being but a small specimen of their barbarous cruelty. Their object was to ridicule his Messianic claims, and to heap upon him every imaginable indignity and insult; and so this brutal treatment was kept up for several long, weary hours, until his sensitive soul had grown sick under their coarse jests and rude sarcasm; and these cruelties were perpetrated at least by the permission, and perhaps with the sanction and encouragement, of the very court whose duty it was to protect him.

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Anxious to get their prisoner into the hands of the Romans before daylight set the city astir with its mighty multitudes, lest an attempt might be made to release him by his friends from Galilee and elsewhere, the Sanhedrim reassembles at the earliest practicable moment for the purpose of ratifying in regular, formal session the verdict already rendered. Hurriedly arranging the necessary preliminaries, they perform another act of unwar-



ranted cruelty by again binding Jesus; and thus bound they "carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate," who was at that time the Roman governor of Judea, and whose very name has been handed down the centuries as the synonym of cruelty and injustice.

The palace of the governor is soon reached, and for the first time Jesus stands amid such gorgeous surroundings a prisoner. True to their hypocritical character, for fear of ceremonial defilement, which would disqualify them for eating the feast to be celebrated that evening, the accusers of the prisoner refuse to enter the palace; and so Pilate, well knowing that it was useless to attempt to overcome their scruples, yields to their wishes and has his chair of state moved out into the open air to a place known as "Gabbatha," or "the pavement," so called because it was elevated and laid with a mosaic of colored stones. Up the steps to this tribunal the rulers now lead their prisoner into the presence of the governor, who immedi-

ately asks of what crime he has been guilty; and, fully conscious that they have no adequate charge, they reply by a base insinuation to the effect that if they had not supposed him to be worthy of death they would not have come before him.

The prisoner was perhaps not entirely unknown to Pilate, who had doubtless heard of his miracles and his teachings; but from investigations he had already made he felt assured that there was nothing of a political character in his teachings and nothing of enmity against the government, and so nothing to be feared from the inoffensive teacher. He knew also that his teachings were directed against the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and so he rightly judged that envy and malice prompted their present proceedings. He determines, therefore, to have nothing to do in the matter, and attempts to send them away by directing them to go and try the prisoner according to their own law. But the determined Jews were not so easily dis-

missed, for they at once reply that they have already tried him by their law and by that law he ought to die, but as it was not lawful for them to put him to death (John xviii. 31) they come to him to get the sanction of Roman authority. Seeing the governor hesitate, and fearing that their victim will be set at liberty, they begin to accuse him of "perverting the nation," "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar," and "claiming to be himself Christ, a king."

Failing to find out any thing satisfactory from the clamorous crowd, Pilate takes the prisoner aside "into the judgment-hall" and seeks to find out from him the nature of his claims as King of the Jews; for he felt that there might be something worthy of attention in this charge, and as a loyal subject of Cæsar he is jealous of even a possible rival. Alone with Pilate, our Lord unhesitatingly explains the true nature of his kingdom as spiritual rather than temporal; and therefore in no way were Cæsar's rights endangered.

Of this claim to kingship, to which Paul refers in 1 Tim. vi. 13, Olshausen beautifully remarks that "as the Lord owned himself the Son of God before the most exalted *theocratic* council, so he confessed his *regal dignity* in the presence of the representative of the highest *political* authority upon earth."

Convinced of the prisoner's innocence, Pilate returns with him to his accusers, and declares that he "finds in him no fault at all."

At this declaration they become so alarmed and enraged that "the chief priests accused him of many things," or, as the Greek implies, they accused him *much* or *vehemently*.

Their anger and excitement knew no bounds, and so, instead of allowing Caiaphas to speak for them, as at first, they all began with united voice to condemn the prisoner, who in the midst of the tumult remained calm and self-possessed, and "answered nothing."

He had already answered both them and the governor, and he well knew that repetition would effect nothing. Pilate had been ac-

customed to see persons accused of even small offenses endeavor to exculpate themselves, but here was a prisoner on trial for his life making no effort to escape, although he had privately given evidence that he could easily establish his innocence; and so he "asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled." Luke (xxiii. 5) gives sedition as one of the many charges brought against the prisoner by the Jews, who well knew that it was the most formidable they could bring; and to give color to the accusation, they place the scene of the insurrection in the remote and turbulent region of Galilee (Luke xiii. 1; Acts v. 37).

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For some reason Pilate was anxious to get rid of the responsibility of trying the prisoner; and so, no sooner does he hear that he is from Galilee than he sends him to Herod, to whose jurisdiction he naturally belonged,

and who was at that time present in Jerusalem that as a loyal Jew he might observe the Passover. Under the protection of a Roman guard, the prisoner is again marched through the ever-increasing crowd to the palace of Herod, who was glad of the opportunity of seeing a man concerning whom he had heard so much; but, disappointed that he did not favor him with an exhibition of his miraculous power, he treats him with the utmost indignity and sends him again to Pilate, who "when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him" (Luke xxiii. 13-15).

Convinced of the prisoner's innocence, Pilate was anxious to release him, but hesitated

to do so for fear of offending the Jews; and so he vainly attempts to gain their consent to his release in accordance with a custom then prevalent, for "at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired." The origin of this custom is unknown, but it was probably established by the Romans for the purpose of conciliating their Jewish subjects. The suggestion that he should observe this custom on the present occasion was probably made by Pilate in the hope of thus setting the prisoner at liberty by the consent and at the request of the Jews themselves; and so no sooner is the suggestion made than it is heartily seconded by the excited mob, for "the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them," and he, pleased at this happy solution of his difficulty, "answers them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" This was what he desired to do, but it was the very last thing that they desired he should do.

His question was one of biting, bitter sarcasm, although perhaps not so intended, for "it assumed that the hated Roman power could do the Jews no higher favor than to release to them their king!" His question, therefore, instead of conciliating the Jews, had the very opposite effect; but Pilate was shrewd enough to understand their motives in apprehending Jesus, "for he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy." He knew enough of the controversy between the prisoner and the Jewish rulers to understand that their hatred of him was not prompted by love of the Roman government, but by jealousy aroused by the ever-increasing popularity of the Nazarene; and so his object in asking such a question was perhaps twofold—to taunt and humiliate the rulers and at the same time secure the release of the prisoner through his popularity, believing that the multitude did not share the feelings of the rulers; and he would probably have realized his desire had not the



chief priests, in their turn detecting his motive, "moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them." The portrait of this man, as sketched by the inspired penman, is by no means complimentary to the taste of the Jews in making such a choice, for he is described as one "who had made insurrection, and who had committed murder in the insurrection." He was a leader in some well-known riot whose hands were stained with crimes of the deepest dye; but nothing is known of him except what is recorded in the four Gospels. His name in the Hebrew means "father's son," and so suggests the idea that he was an idolized son, ruined, like so many others, by the over-indulgence of a fond father.

A singularly interesting coincidence in the names of the two prisoners is noted in some of the ancient manuscripts and translations. Both prisoners were Jesus Barabbas—"son of the father;" each the idolized object of parental affection. The name was assumed

by one who was a base pretender to Messianic dignity, and who sought to realize the Jewish ideal by an armed rising against the Roman power. The name justly belonged to the other as the true "Barabbas," who sought to accomplish the will of the Father through the channel of humiliation and suffering divinely ordained. And so the two prisoners stood before the same judge charged with the same crime, bearing the same name, and making the same claim to the Messiahship, though attempting to assert that claim in a different manner. Of the guilt of one of the prisoners Pilate was no doubt convinced, while of the innocence of the other he was equally well assured; and so, caring nothing about their Messianic claims except as they led to conspiracy against the Roman government, he sought to release the innocent man, but to his surprise and disappointment his proposal was met by a wild clamor for his blood, and drowned in the excited cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" As

the governor hesitates in his surprise and disappointment, his perplexity and anxiety are still further increased by a message from his wife warning him against condemning the prisoner, of whose innocence she had been supernaturally apprised. At length, recovering from his disappointment, "Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" or, as stated by Matthew, "What, then, shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" To this question they reply with wild excitement, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Then Pilate for the third time asks, "What evil hath he done?" (Luke xxiii. 22). He had failed to find evidence to establish the charge of sedition, and yet it was necessary to enter the evidence with the charge, as well as the sentence, upon his record.

Again declaring the prisoner innocent, he proposes to let him go, but his adversaries "cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify

him!" This was the only evidence they could adduce of his guilt, and *on that evidence he was condemned and executed*. Luke tells us that the mob "were instant with loud voices; . . . and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed," because, as we learn from John xix. 12, they said: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." These wily Jews knew full well the weak spot in the governor's character, and so with consummate skill they force him into compliance with their wishes, for "Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified;" but before doing so, as we learn from Matthew xxvii. 24, "he took water and washed his hands" for the purpose of indicating his innocence of a crime which they voluntarily assumed, and the terrible consequences of which have been visited upon the race from generation to generation in fulfill-

ment of their awful imprecation: "His blood be upon us and our children!" But although vengeance has thus been visited upon the Jews—and justly, because they were guilty of murder—yet the world to-day holds Pilate responsible for the death of Jesus of Nazareth, and his infamous conduct can in nowise be palliated or excused. He no doubt realized that he was in a dilemma; for if he condemned the prisoner to gratify the multitude, he must do so in opposition to his convictions and the dictates of his conscience; but, on the other hand, if he released him, in accordance with his convictions of right, he would offend the people, and they would report him to Cæsar and have him removed from office, or perhaps put to death. In his perplexity, *he appeals to the accusers to pass sentence upon the accused!* and *under that sentence, passed by the malicious mob, our Lord was put to death!* To retain position and power, he is willing to sacrifice principle. He feared Cæsar and the Jews more than he feared

God and conscience, and he loved wealth and ease more than he loved integrity and honor.

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The world never knew such a trial as that accorded to our Lord. At first he was accused of no crime whatever, and when at last accused the charge was thoroughly investigated at two separate and distinct tribunals, *by both of which he was pronounced innocent*, and by one of the judges repeatedly so; *yet, in the face of it all, he was condemned to the most cruel and ignominious death it was in the power of man to inflict.* At best it was a solemn farce, and *his death a foul, premeditated murder*, without one palliating circumstance to mitigate or excuse the fiendish villainy of his persecutors. In order to quell the clamors of the crowd, Pilate outrages right and justice, sacrifices principle and honor, and, after performing another act of unwarranted cruelty, turns the prisoner over into the hands of the brutish multitude. Decency at least would have suggested the propriety of

shielding the innocent victim until the hour of execution; but there was neither decency nor honor connected with any part of the proceedings, which were in the highest sense shameful from beginning to end, and have left a foul, ineffaceable stigma upon the records of the past.

Punishment by scourging was exceedingly severe. The scourge itself was a whip with several thongs, made rough with bits of iron or bone for tearing the flesh. With this the victim was beaten on the bare back while he was firmly tied to a column or frame. Even this act of cruelty was not omitted, for at the command of Pilate Jesus was seized, and bound in a stooping posture, his hands behind his back, to a post or low pillar near the tribunal. He was then beaten with the terrible scourge, or Roman "scorpion," until the soldiers chose to stop. In many cases not only was the back of the person scourged, cut open in all directions, but even the eyes, the face, and the breast were torn and cut,

and the teeth often knocked out. Under the fury of the countless stripes the victims sometimes sunk, amid screams, convulsive leaps, and distortions, into a senseless heap; sometimes died on the spot; sometimes were taken away an unrecognizable mass of bleeding flesh, to find deliverance in death from the inflammation and fever, sickness and shame.

The scourging of Jesus was of the severest kind, because as a hated Jew the soldiers delighted to see him suffer; and so, after he was thus cruelly scourged, Pilate, wearied with his fruitless efforts to release the prisoner, "delivered him to the will" of his enemies, who, eager to make sport of their helpless victim, "led him away into the hall called pretorium," because it was the residence of the pretor, or governor. Here Jews and Gentiles vie with each other in heaping upon him indignity and insults. "The soldiers," who acted as Pilate's body-guard, perhaps join with the "rulers" and the mob in making sport of the prisoner. For the purpose



of deriding his regal claims "they clothed him in purple," in mockery of the *imperial purple*, or robe of royalty, "and platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head," in mockery of a regal *crown*, or of a victor's wreath. Their object was to ridicule his kingly claims, regardless of the suffering they might occasion; and so, to make the burlesque complete, "they put a reed in his right-hand," in mockery of the regal scepter, "and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!" thus offering in derision the homage customarily rendered to princes. Their object was to caricature the prisoner as a king, but with their efforts at rude burlesque they mingled acts of savage cruelty, for "they smote him on the head with the reed," and with every stroke the thorns were driven down into the quivering flesh; but regardless of this suffering they "added insult to injury," for "they did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshiped him," rendering mock homage.

Here John (xix. 4-6) records another effort on the part of Pilate to secure the prisoner's release. Thus caricatured, he brings him forth to the people, vainly hoping that his suffering and humiliation would awaken their pity, but instead it only inflamed their hatred, and excited again the cruel cry for his crucifixion.

Finding that they cannot secure the prisoner's conviction under the Roman law, the "rulers," in their fiendish determination to put him to death, fall back upon the old Jewish law, and, declaring that it is Pilate's duty to uphold it, they, renew against the prisoner the charge of blasphemy, which, according to Jewish law, was punishable with death. The governor no sooner hears of the prisoner's claim to divinity than he is filled with a strange fear, and again taking him aside, interrogates him as to his origin, but receives no reply. Astonished at this silence, he refers to his power as judge either to acquit or convict, and receives the answer

that he has no power, except such as is given him. Aided by this mysterious answer, "Pilate thenceforth sought to release him," but the Jews, well knowing his vacillating character, threaten him with *impeachment*, and so secure the prisoner's condemnation.

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In the year 1280, in the city of Aquilla, in the kingdom of Naples, a brass plate was discovered, upon which was engraved in the Hebrew language the sentence thus passed upon our Saviour, and is as follows:

"Sentence pronounced by Pontius Pilate, Intendant of the Lower Province of Galilee, that Jesus of Nazareth shall suffer death by the cross.

"In the seventeenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, and on the twenty-fourth day of the month of March, in the most holy city of Jerusalem, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Intendant of the Lower Province of Galilee, sitting to judgment in the presiden-

tial seat of the Pretor, sentences Jesus of Nazareth to death on a cross between robbers, as the numerous and notorious testimonies of the people prove: (1) Jesus is a misleader; (2) he has excited the people to sedition; (3) he is an enemy to the laws; (4) He calls himself the Son of God; (5) he calls himself falsely the King of Israel; (6) he went into the temple, followed by a multitude carrying palms in their hands. Orders the first centurion, Quirrillis Cornelius, to bring him to the place of execution. Forbids all persons, rich or poor, to prevent the execution of Jesus. The witnesses who have signed the execution of Jesus are: (1) Daniel Robani, Pharisee; (2) John Zorababel; (3) Raphael Robani; (4) Capet."

The reasons here assigned for his death correspond with those given in the inspired narrative, and so the record is interesting, whether genuine or not.

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Among the spectators of the trial and its

scenes of cruelty there was at least one who was far from desiring the verdict of condemnation, and that one was Judas Iscariot.

Having secured their victim, the mob move off and leave the treacherous disciple alone with his conscience in the deep stillness of the night. Thus removed from the busy, bustling crowd, memory becomes active, and wanders back over the pleasant associations of the past three years, when suddenly a realization of the future bursts upon him. Pale with fear and overwhelmed with remorse, he follows the crowd to the palace of the high-priest, and stands through the long hours of the night an interested witness of all that occurs. At the earliest possible moment he hurries to the temple, and seeks an interview with the priests to undo, if possible, the evil he had done. He asserts the prisoner's innocence, and implores his release, and the better to secure it he offers to give back the paltry price he had received

for his treachery. But those to whom he spoke were as immovable as the stones of the pavement upon which they sat. At last, in desperation he casts down the money that had been the ruin of his soul, and hurries off to the judgment-hall of the governor. Here he remains, with his eyes riveted upon the prisoner, in the vain hope that he will yet call into exercise his miraculous power, and set himself at liberty; but he is again disappointed. And so, when at last he hears the terrible sentence of condemnation from the lips of the governor, he can endure his agony no longer, but, hurrying away to a secluded spot, seeks to put an end to his misery by committing suicide; and there he is subsequently found, a most revolting spectacle (Acts i. 18, 19). The hypocritical priests were quite willing to make use of the money which had accomplished their fiendish purposes, and so use it to buy the field in which Judas had "hanged himself" as a burying-place for strangers, thus unwittingly fulfill-

ing the prophecy uttered long years before (Zech. xi. 12, 13).

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The soldiers, having satisfied themselves with their cruel sport in ridiculing and insulting the prisoner, proceed to obey the governor's orders; for "when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe from him, and led him out to crucify him." No executions were allowed within the city limits, and so they led him out of the city, thus unintentionally fulfilling the prophecies embodied in the typical ordinances. The procession advanced, no doubt, in the usual formal manner: "First, the mounted centurion, who had charge of the execution; next, the soldiers who were to maintain order; then the prisoners, each bearing his own cross, and guarded by four soldiers chosen to inflict the death-penalty, two on each side. In front of each convict marched an inferior officer, carrying before him the board on which the sentence of condemnation was

written in large letters." According to this custom, as we learn from John (xix. 17), our Lord went forth bearing his own cross; but so exhausted was he, by the nervous excitement occasioned by the scenes and suffering through which he had passed on that eventful night, that he could not sustain its weight, and so "they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by coming out of the country, to bear his cross." From Luke (xxiii. 26) it would appear that the after part of the cross alone, which usually dragged upon the ground, was put upon Simon; but, whatever the method adopted, it was necessary to relieve the fainting prisoner of his terrible load.

Simon no doubt undertook the unpleasant service unwillingly, but the scene he was compelled to witness was blessed to his conversion, perhaps, and that of his family, for it is easy to believe the tradition that the "Rufus and his mother" (Rom. xvi. 13), to whom Paul refers, were his wife



and one of the sons mentioned by Mark (xv. 21).

As the vast company advances, the road is lined on either side by spectators, drawn together by curiosity to catch even a glimpse of the famous prisoner. Among others were many of the noble women of Jerusalem, who did not hesitate to express their sympathy for the uncomplaining sufferer. Their words fell like balm upon his suffering soul, and instantly his lips, that had been sealed so long, were opened, and he gives utterance to words of pity and tender interest, strangely intermingled with prophecies of fearful import (Luke xxiii. 27-31). To make his ignominy complete, "there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death," probably companions of Barabbas. How far the place of execution was from Jerusalem we do not know, but after what must have been a wearisome journey, however short the distance, "they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is. being inter-

puted, The place of a skull," so called either because it was the place of execution or because of its resemblance to a "skull." The Latin word answering to the Hebrew word Golgotha is "Calvaria," from which is derived the English word "Calvary." The location of this memorable spot, of such unspeakable interest to the human race, is unknown.

"Arrived at the place of execution, the condemned were stripped and fastened to the cross, which was usually of the form familiar to us, but not nearly so high as is commonly represented. The feet of the sufferer were only a foot or two above the ground—a fact of some weight, as showing that Jesus suffered in the midst of his persecutors, and not looking down from above their heads. When the cross was already standing, the sufferer was raised up and affixed to it, but otherwise, as in our Saviour's case, he was fastened to it as it lay upon the ground, and the shock when it was dropped into the hole

or socket must have been terrible." It was probably during the painful process of nailing his hands and feet to the cross that our Lord uttered his first exclamation: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Crucifixion was regarded as so infamous and cruel that it was not allowed to be inflicted upon a Roman citizen, but was reserved for slaves and rebels; and in the language of another: "Of all the devices of cruel imaginations, crucifixion is the masterpiece. Other pains may be sharper for a time, but none are at once so agonizing and so long. The process of nailing was exquisite torment, worse in what ensued than in the actual infliction. The spikes rankled, the wounds inflamed, the local injury produced a general fever, the fever a most intolerable thirst; but the misery of miseries to the sufferer was, while racked with agony, to be fastened in a position which did not permit him even to writhe. Every attempt

to relieve the muscles, every instinctive movement of anguish, only served to drag the lacerated flesh and wake up new and acuter pangs; and this torture, which must have been continually aggravated until advancing death began to lay it asleep, lasted, on an average, two or three days." Or, as described by Geikie: "The suffering in crucifixion, from which death at last resulted, rose partly from the constrained and fixed position of the body, and of the outstretched arms, which caused intense pain from every twitch or motion of the back, lacerated by the scourge, and of the hands and feet pierced by the nails. These latter were, moreover, driven through parts where many sensitive nerves and sinews come together, and some of these were mutilated, others violently crushed down. Inflammation of the wounds speedily set in. Intolerable thirst and ever-increasing pain resulted. The blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, swelled the veins and arteries in

it unnaturally, and caused the most agonizing tortures in the brain. The heart grew more and more oppressed, and all the veins were distended. Had the wounds bled freely, it would have been a great relief; but there was very little blood lost. The weight of the body itself, resting on the wooden pin of the upright beam, the burning heat of a Syrian sun scorching the veins, and the hot wind, which dried up the moisture of the body, made each moment more terrible than that before. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on painful convulsions; and this numbness, slowly extending, sometimes through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death."

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About nine o'clock, perhaps, the procession reached the place of execution, and as a preparation for the fearful ordeal through which he must pass, "they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh," a rude opiate given to

convicts to stupefy them, and so diminish the agonies of death. "But when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." Suffering as the sinner's substitute, he will endure the full measure of his punishment. When he has been firmly raised to the cross, they "set up over his head his accusation written, *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews,*" and according to custom it was probably engraved on a metal plate, with black characters on a white ground. As we learn from John (xix. 20), it was "written in Hebrew, and Latin, and Greek"—the vernacular, the official, and the literary language of the country—so that all classes could read it. Stung by the biting sarcasm of such an inscription, the Jews sought to have it changed, but in vain; for although other charges had been preferred against the prisoner, Pilate passes them by, and fixes upon this for the purpose of thus publicly proclaiming his friendship for Cæsar, and at the same time, perhaps, for the purpose of humiliating those who, by

threats of impeachment, had caused him to act contrary to his convictions of right and justice. The Jews had accused him of not being Cæsar's friend, and so in this way he publicly refutes the accusation to the manifest mortification and dismay of those who had brought it; and in so doing, as Brown suggests, he performed an act which, "amidst the conflicting passions of men, proclaimed in the chief tongues of mankind, from the cross itself, and in circumstances which threw upon it a lurid yet grand light, the truth which drew the magi to the manger, and will yet be owned by all the world."

In compliance with the clamorous cry of the multitude, Pilate had substituted Jesus for the notorious Barabbas, and so in his execution he is made to occupy the position of eminence as the chief criminal; for "with him they crucify two thieves, the one on his right-hand, and the other on his left." But although the purpose of this arrangement was to humiliate Jesus, yet in it the overruling hand of

God is visible; for thus "the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah liii. 12). While he is thus enduring disgrace and agony, his sensitive soul is still further tortured by rude sarcasm and cruel jest. These mockeries emanated from four different sources: First, from *the people*. "They that passed by"—along the highway near which the crucifixion took place, but more especially, perhaps, the immense crowd that had gathered to witness the execution—"railed on him, wagging their heads," both with significant gestures and derisive words thus mocking his pretensions to divinity; for they said, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross." The accusation made before the Sanhedrim by the false witnesses was now echoed by the cruel crowd as proof of the futility of all his claims; but although perverted by them, in its real import the prophecy was at that moment being actually



fulfilled; and although he could easily have come down from the cross, yet if he had done so he could not have performed the greater miracle of *coming up from the grave* in fulfillment of the prophecy which they had so willfully misinterpreted. To these were added a second class of mockers; for "likewise also the chief priests mocking, said among themselves with the scribes and elders, He saved others; himself he cannot save." These highest officials of the Jewish nation thus disregard the dignity of their position, and, losing sight of all decency, join with the rabble crowd in their rude jests, and call out to each other in hearing of their suffering victim a fact so well known that they were compelled to admit, but which they construe into a taunt in the hour of his extremity. But their words had a deeper meaning than they ever dreamed of, for although he could have saved himself, it would have been at the expense of man's salvation. *Both* himself and others he could not save!

To this they sneeringly add another taunt, based upon his claim to be the King of the Jews. They had earnestly attempted to get the superscription changed so that it would merely set forth an empty claim to regal rights, but here we find them gladly making use of it to fling a cruel challenge into the teeth of their victim; for they said, "Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, and we will believe on him." *Yet they did not believe when he came up from the grave*, nor had they believed evidence equally as conclusive received many times before (Luke xvi. 31). A third class of mockers is indicated by Luke (xxiii. 36), who says: "The soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself." It being about the time of their midday meal, they insultingly offer to share with him their sour wine, the usual drink of Roman soldiers, and so make sport of him as a pretender to royalty. The fourth and last class

of mockers were the thieves "that were crucified with him;" for, although only one reviled him, he designated a class different from all the others, and thus all classes—Jew and Gentile, citizen and soldier, official and persons in private life, convict and those unaccused—joined in deriding and insulting the suffering Son of God. But while one of the thieves exhibits the brutality of his depraved nature by joining in the derisive taunts of the abusive crowd, the other has been strangely influenced by his solemn surroundings, and so, after rebuking his companion, he turns to Jesus with a faith that is truly sublime. He expresses his conviction that Jesus is not only a King, but also the Messiah, and receives in reply the welcome assurance that he shall be a participant of the Master's glory in heaven. The unlimited power of the Redeemer is herein strikingly set forth. Even while in the very throes of death, and surrounded on every hand by the powers of darkness, he is still able to save the very

chief of sinners. But the salvation of the thief upon the cross affords no encouragement for death-bed conversion, for it is probable that he had received that very day his first knowledge of the plan of salvation, so that, instead of postponing the acceptance of eternal life to the last opportunity, *he really embraced the very first opportunity he ever enjoyed.* But as another has said: "The Bible gives one case of death-bed repentance that none may despair, and gives *only one* that none may presume."

While these cruel mockeries are being perpetrated, the four soldiers who guard the prisoner divide his clothing among themselves, "casting lots for his coat, which was without seam, woven from the top throughout" (John xix. 23, 24), thus unconsciously fulfilling a prophecy (Psalm xxii. 18) uttered long years before.

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So far as we know, none of the Twelve, except John, had the nerve to follow their

Master to the place of execution; but the loyal, loving heart of woman, ever brave in the hour of real peril and faithful in the time of direst need, secured even for that dark scene a little circle of sympathizing friends, for "there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." They were all friends true and tried, and as the eyes of the weary sufferer rested upon them his heart no doubt thrilled with a momentary pleasure as he thought of their fidelity; but it was as quickly pierced with a pang of regret as he thought of the sorrow and loneliness of his mother, who was most probably a childless widow; and so far forgetting his own sufferings for the moment, he occupies himself in making provisions for her in her declining days by committing her as a sacred charge into the hands of his firm friend; and his confidence was not misplaced, for "from that hour that disciple took her into his own home." These were the

friends who in other days, "when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him," and who not only followed him *in* Galilee but "*from* Galilee, ministering to him" on his journey to Jerusalem (Matt. xxvii. 52). They had willingly encountered the rude jeers of the mocking multitude, and had taken their stand by the cross in order that they might by their presence soothe and comfort the weary sufferer. But even this melancholy pleasure was denied both him and them, for, driven away no doubt by their enemies, we subsequently find them standing at a distance, sorrowfully contemplating the last scene in this dreadful drama of death (Mark xv. 40, 41).

Our Lord had now hung upon the cross for three long, wearisome hours, during which his enemies had cruelly gloated over his sufferings; and, as if in purposed contrast, for the same length of time sympathetic nature hides herself in a pall of mourning, for "when the sixth hour was come,

there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour." From twelve o'clock until three the whole land of Israel was enveloped in strange, supernatural darkness, the earth reeled with crucifixion agony, and the burning eye of the sun grew blind with grief. No ordinary eclipse could account for the darkness, for it was full moon when the execution took place; nor could it have lasted so long had it been possible to occur. As Godwin remarks: "A heavenly brightness in the night had marked the time of the Saviour's birth, and now an earthly darkness in the day marked the time of his death."

For six long hours, amid the intensest sufferings and deepest insults, Jesus had preserved a silence broken only by a *prayer* for his enemies, the *utterance of pardon* for the penitent thief, and the *declaration of provision* for his disconsolate mother. Not a murmur nor a word of reproach escaped his lips. But now the air is suddenly rent with a wild cry of anguish such as the world never heard

before nor since: "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*"—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This cry marked the very climax of his sufferings. The quintessence of his anguish was the felt sense of his Father's desertion. In the language of Brown: "'Father' was the cry in the first prayer which he uttered on the cross, for matters had not then come to their worst; 'Father' was the cry of his last prayer, for matters had then passed their worst. But at this crisis of his sufferings 'Father' does not issue from his lips, for the light of a Father's countenance was then mysteriously eclipsed. An absolute desertion is not to be thought of, but a total eclipse of the *felt* sense of God's presence the cry certainly expresses." Either from a misunderstanding of his words or from a villainous desire to plunge the cruel shaft of sarcasm into his soul, his enemies even *attempt to pun upon the language of death*, for "some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias."



And while they are uttering this rude jest he makes his fifth utterance from the cross; for, "knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture [Ps. lxix. 21] might be fulfilled, he saith, I thirst;" and in answer to this cry one more humane than his companions "ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave him to drink;" but for this he was rebuked by the others, who said, "Let alone, let us see whether Elias will come to take him down." After receiving the vinegar, Jesus uttered his sixth exclamation upon the cross—"It is finished"—and shortly afterward his seventh and last: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And so, "when he had thus cried with a loud voice, he gave up the ghost"—literally, "he let go the spirit"—in fulfillment of his own words: "I lay down my life of myself" (John x. 18).

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The death of Christ is the most remarkable occurrence recorded upon the pages of

the world's history. It stands without a parallel—a wonder, a mystery, so deep that the mind of man has never been able fully to grasp it; and yet it fills the souls of rejoicing multitudes with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Standing as we do two thousand years from the scene of suffering, it is difficult for us to grasp it as a reality. But it was no myth, and all the circumstances surrounding it tend to aggravate its horrors. His countrymen and his kinsmen conspire to take his life, urged to the dreadful deed by unprovoked enmity, envy, and jealousy. Guided by one of his trusted companions, they steal upon him in the lone hours of the night, and rudely tear him from his devotions as he devoutly kneels in prayer before his Father. They disregard his deep sorrow and scorn the bloody sweat which bathes his suffering form. They hurry him off to the hall of judgment, and, gathering around him, vie with each other in heaping upon him insults and injuries. They mock him;

they spit upon him; they smite him; they clothe him with the mock robe of royalty, and then with biting sarcasm hail him as king; they crown him with thorns, and press their sharp points into his tender temples; they bring him before the judge under a false accusation, crying the while, "Crucify him!" and prefer that a vile robber shall be turned loose upon them rather than spare the life of the quiet, inoffensive Nazarene; they cruelly scourge him until his delicate frame is torn and lacerated, and literally bathed with blood. And all this he suffers alone, his cowardly disciples having deserted him in this dark hour of trial. From the judgment-hall he is hurried away to the place of execution; and weary and worn out by sorrow and suffering as he is, he is made to bear the heavy burden of the cross until he actually faints from sheer exhaustion; and when the fearful spot is at last reached, they rudely seize him and stretch him upon the rough, rugged tree, while through his hands

and his feet they drive huge iron spikes. Having thus secured him, they raise the cross from the ground and drop it with a terrible jar into the socket prepared for its reception. Then they gather around and revile him, and cruelly mock at his sufferings as through the long, tedious hours he hangs suspended, with the nails tearing his quivering flesh, until at length life, weary of the fruitless struggle, quits the suffering body.

But, in addition to all these physical sufferings, his soul was oppressed with agony still more intense, for he not only bore the insults of his enemies and the cruel desertion of his friends, but even the frown of an offended Father because he died as the representative sinner; for, although free from sin himself, the guilt of a wicked world rested upon him, and so odious is sin in the sight of God that he withdrew his presence and his sympathy even from his dying Son while he rested under its terrible curse; and per-

haps this sorrow of soul occasioned by the desertion of his Father outweighed all his other sufferings combined.

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The tragedy upon Calvary is not a picture of the imagination, but it was an actual occurrence. Christ's sufferings were real sufferings, and his death a real death. If we could have been there, and looked upon the countenance as it writhed in agony, and seen the blood as it flowed from the wounds, our impressions would be different from what they now are. But it may assist us to a better appreciation of the momentous facts if we remember that Christ was a true man, with human blood flowing through his veins, possessed of human sensibilities and sympathies and affections. When his friends deserted him, his sensitive nature was touched just as ours would be under similar circumstances; so that it was not a trivial matter that his disciples forsook him at a time when their very presence would have been a source

of comfort and strength. It was not a little thing that Peter denied him with oaths and cursing in his very presence; that Peter, of whom he thought so much, for whom he had done so much, and of whom he had a right to expect so much, should thus repudiate him. It was not a small thing to have the brutish crowd gather around him and revile him as he writhed in the very agonies of death. Perhaps we can get a better idea of his sufferings by imagining ourselves in his position—our hands torn with nails, our heads pierced with thorns, our bodies worn with weakness and sorrow. When hurried off to Calvary, his body was already sore from the cruel scourging, and every nerve quick and sensitive from loss of sleep and protracted suffering. Such was his condition when the great burden of the cross was placed upon him and he was hurried to the place of execution; and there, without one loving friend to whisper words of comfort, without one kind hand to press his throb-

bing brow, without any friendly opiate to diminish the pain, he is rudely seized and nailed to the cross; and little did the rough soldiers care for the pain he suffered. He was a condemned prisoner, and that was license for every species of brutality and every kind of insult. It was a cruel, cruel death he died, the awful reality of which we cannot begin to conceive. His physical sufferings appear perfectly appalling, and yet to all these must be added the weightier sufferings of the soul when he was brought into such close contact with sin that even his Father turns away and leaves him to suffer alone. His death was not the peaceful exit of the soul from the body in some quiet chamber where weeping friends gather around the bedside, but it was the life-blood rudely torn from the veins and life itself dethroned by the hand of violence; and that, too, under circumstances the most ignominious and shameful it was possible for human ingenuity to devise or fiendish malice to dictate.

But Christ's death not only stands without a parallel in its ignominy and cruelty: it also marks a new epoch in the world's history, and was attended by events both strange and startling; for no sooner had the shout of triumph, "It is finished!" died upon the air than "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Under the old dispensation, none might enter the holy of holies, where abode the shekinah, except the high-priest, and even he only once a year, and then "not without blood" (Heb. ix. 7). But now, as Brown suggests, "the one atoning sacrifice being provided in the blood of Christ, access to this holy God could no longer be denied; and so the moment the victim expired upon the altar that thick veil, which had for so many ages been *the dread symbol of separation between God and guilty men*, was, without a hand touching it, mysteriously rent in twain from top to bottom, as if to say: Come boldly now to the throne of grace. The veil is clean gone;



the mercy-seat stands open to the gaze of sinners, and the way to it is sprinkled with the blood of him "who through the eternal Spirit hath offered himself without spot to God." *Before it was death to go in; now it is death to stay out.*

Simultaneously with the death of Christ and the rending of the Temple veil, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened," which produced a profound impression upon the minds of all who witnessed these strange phenomena. And so when the centurion who had charge of the execution, and who "stood over against him," where he could both see and hear all that occurred, saw that he "cried out with a strong voice"—evincing none of the weakness of ordinary death—and that he gave up the ghost long before the usual time, and apparently voluntarily, he was convinced that the sufferer's claims to divinity as brought out in the trial were well founded and true; for he said, "Truly, this man was

the Son of God." It has been conjectured that this officer was Cornelius, the centurion of Cesarea, who was afterward converted under Peter's preaching, and whose family were the first trophies of the gospel gathered from the Gentile world (Acts x. 1-48).

It was contrary to the Mosaic law (Deut. xxi. 22, 23) for the dead bodies of those who had been hanged to remain overnight unburied; and so, as this was an occasion of more than ordinary interest and solemnity with the Jews, they were very anxious to observe the law; and hence, as we learn from John (xix. 31-47), they request that the legs of the prisoners may be broken, in order to hasten their death. But when they come to Christ, finding him already dead, they content themselves with piercing his side with a spear, thus unintentionally fulfilling two prophecies (Ex. xii. 46, and Zech. xii. 10). As Campbell suggests: "This great Sacrifice was laid upon the altar at the hour of the morning sacrifice, and was finished at the

hour of the evening sacrifice." From nine till three the victim was being offered, and when the sacrifice was at last complete, the hour had arrived when regular work ceased with the Jews, the next three hours being employed in making preparations for the Sabbath, which began about six o'clock. The burial of the crucified convicts must take place before that time, and so they begin at once to make the necessary preparations. Seeing this, "Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, came and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus." He was a member of the Sanhedrim, a man of position and influence, and had long been a disciple of the Master, "but secretly, for fear of the Jews." Seeing the object of his heart's affection exposed to every imaginable indignity, he suddenly loses his fear, and, with a faith that is truly sublime, for the first time publicly identifies himself with the disciples of the crucified Nazarene; and that, too, under circumstances

the most unfavorable, for he was no longer *the wonder-worker*, as in days gone by, but he was dead, and his cause was apparently dead with him. Pilate was astonished, no doubt, at such a request, from such a man, and also to learn that the prisoner was so soon dead, several days sometimes elapsing before death ensued from crucifixion; and so, "calling unto him the centurion," who had charge of the execution, and *receiving from him his official testimony to the fact of Christ's death*, "he gave the body to Joseph, who bought fine linen, and took him down and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher." From Matthew (xxvii. 60) we learn that this sepulcher was entirely new, being one which Joseph had prepared for himself, and, like that of Lazarus (John xi. 38), it was a chamber excavated in the rock, with a low doorway, but large enough for persons to enter it (John xx. 5-8). It was situated in a gar-

den, not far from the place of execution (John xix. 41); and in the burial-services, as we learn from John (xix. 39, 40), Nicodemus, and perhaps other friends, assisted. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah (liii. 9), and thus did Providence interpose to protect the body of our Lord from the least indignity after he had finished the work given him to do. As Alexander suggests: "Before that every thing was providentially so ordered as to aggravate, and almost exaggerate, our Lord's humiliation, so now the same extraordinary Providence is visible, protecting his remains from profanation, and securing them an honorable burial, preparatory to his resurrection. The insults of the soldiers and the rabble and the rulers are now followed by the tenderest attentions of refined and tender friendship; the scourge, the buffet, and the spittle, by delicate perfumes and spices; the mock robe and thorny crown, by pure white linen and a grave where no corpse had ever rested."

Among others who gathered around the hallowed spot to do honor to the dead were the faithful women who had followed him in his long pilgrimage from Galilee (Luke xxiii. 55, 56). But while friendship was thus busy in the performance of these solemn rites, the malignity of his enemies pursued him even to the grave; for, suddenly awaking to a new cause of alarm, they hurry to Pilate, and beg that the sepulcher may be guarded and sealed; but, contrary to their intentions, as Brown suggests, "their stone-covered, seal-secured sepulcher shall preserve the sleeping dust of the Son of God free from all indignities, in sublime and undisturbed repose, while their watch shall be his guard of honor until the angels shall come and take their place!"

Thus, less than one week from the triumphant entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, the same men who then hailed him as King mingled their voices in one clamorous chorus for his blood, and when at last their cruel

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enmity was satiated in the awful tragedy of the cross, they turn to observe a feast, *the significance of which their dark deed had blotted out forever!* And as they thus engage in the sacred ceremonies of that time-honored festival, the victim of their groundless prejudice, now forever removed from the cruel insults and bitter agony of that wearisome week, *keeps the last Jewish Sabbath amid the solemn hush and sublime silence of the grave.*

Sunday, April 9, A.D. 30

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BUT it was impossible for death to retain its hold upon one who had voluntarily given up his life, and so, when the hour appointed for the manifestation of his triumph had come, he burst the bonds of death, and came forth the acknowledged conqueror of the grave! As he finds in woman his most faithful friend, so to her is given the first announcement of his resurrection, the first sight of the risen Lord, and the first commission to herald the glorious truth to others. These faithful "women of Galilee," as soon as the sanctity of the Sabbath will allow, repair at the earliest possible moment to the sepulcher for the purpose of embalming the body of their deceased friend, thus evincing their ardent *love* for his person, but at the same time showing that *faith* in his



promise and prophecy concerning his resurrection had taken its flight *even from the trusting heart of woman!* To their surprise they find the "stone rolled away," and the sepulcher empty. The "seal" had been broken by authority from a higher court than that of Pilate, and the warlike Roman "guards" were paralyzed with fear at the approach of some of the majestic sentinels of heaven. The women, ignorant of what had occurred, at once conclude that their enemies have removed the body to some secret place, and so they at once dispatch one of their number to inform the disciples of the fact. While she is gone on this errand the others approach nearer the sepulcher, and to their dismay discover the presence of two angels, who bear the *first testimony* to the fact of the resurrection; and when they had received this testimony, and looked upon the empty grave, "they remembered their Lord's words" (Luke xxiv. 8), and felt their sorrow-burdened souls thrill with joyful anticipa-

tions. At the suggestion of the angels they hurry away to publish the glad news to the sorrowing disciples, and while they are gone Mary Magdalene, whom they had sent to inform the disciples of the removal of their Lord's body, returns, and with her Peter and John. John, being the younger and fleetest of the two, reaches the sepulcher first, but pauses on the outside, whereas Peter goes at once into the sepulcher. John soon follows, and seeing the "napkin and linen clothes" carefully laid aside, he was convinced of his Master's resurrection.

In the meantime the women have reached the city and informed the other disciples of what they have seen and heard, but "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." After satisfying themselves that their Lord was indeed risen, Peter and John return to Jerusalem, "wondering" at the strange things they had seen, and discussing together the fact of the resurrection. But, true to her woman's nature, Mary still

lingers at the sacred spot, and is soon rewarded by a vision of angels and the sweeter vision of her risen Lord (John xx. 11-18), by whom she was commissioned to inform his disciples, not only of his resurrection from the grave, but also of his "ascension," at an early day, into glory. Thus these faithful women, who, when his disciples had forsaken him, had stood by him in the darkest hour of his humiliation and agony, are now rewarded for their fidelity by being made the first heralds of his triumph and glory; so that, if woman must be made to bear the greater humiliation in the fall of the first Adam, to her must likewise be accorded the higher honor in the victory of the second Adam.

Not she, with trait'rous kiss, her Master stung;  
Not she denied him with unfaithful tongue.  
She, when apostles fled, could danger brave;  
Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave.

True to her mission, Mary published the glad tidings to the wondering disciples; but

"they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not " Their unbelief is more than once recorded, and, as Brown suggests, "is most important in its bearing on their subsequent testimony to his resurrection, at the risk of life itself."

While the women are thus testifying to his resurrection in the presence of the skeptical disciples, another class of witnesses appear, attesting the same great fact in the presence of the Jewish officials; for the guards, who had been stationed around the grave for the purpose of keeping the body secure until after the time predicted for the resurrection, now adduce evidence the very reverse of what the "rulers" desired; and so, overwhelmed with consternation and dismay, the guilty murderers "take counsel" together, and bribe the soldiers to keep the secret. But it was in vain, for the living and risen Christ gave unmistakable proof of his identity "by many infallible signs," and upon at least ten separate and distinct occasions:

1. To Mary Magdalene (Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 14).

2. To the women returning from the sepulcher (Matt. xxviii. 9, 10).

3. To Peter alone (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5).

4. To the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13-35).

5. To the apostles, except Thomas (Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 19, 25).

6. To the apostles, including Thomas (John xx. 26, 29).

7. To seven of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John xxi. 1-24).

8. To the disciples and "over five hundred brethren" on a mount in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 6).

9. To James, our Lord's brother (1 Cor. xv. 7).

10. To all the apostles at his ascension (Mark xvi. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 50; Acts i. 3-12).

To these must be added his appearance to

Paul (1 Cor. ix. 1, and xv. 8); and, coupled with the testimony of the angels and the Roman guards, such an array of evidence places the fact of our Lord's resurrection beyond the shadow of a doubt. No fact in human history is better attested. It is utterly impossible that so many persons could have been deceived, or that they could have agreed to attest a falsehood with a resolution and determination that caused them to suffer martyrdom rather than retract their testimony. Then the testimony itself comes from friends and foes alike, and even from superhuman witnesses; and among the circle of friends there was every shade of temperament, from the nervous, impulsive Peter to the calm, cool, calculating Thomas, who could not be satisfied with any thing short of a mathematical demonstration. And yet the evidence adduced in proof of the resurrection was so overwhelming that it not only convinced and converted the disciples, without exception, from their former skepticism, but

it made them willing to seal their testimony with their life's blood. But it is well that this momentous fact is thus strongly attested, for it is the very foundation-stone in the scheme of redemption, as Paul plainly proves in his unanswerable argument to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 12-26).

The resurrection of Christ proves the value of preaching and the efficacy of faith, for "if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. xv. 14). It is the pledge and assurance of a general resurrection, for "if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor. xv. 12); and it is the guarantee of the believer's salvation, for it is the seal of approbation which the Father has placed upon the claims and services of his Son; or, as Paul says, by this fact "he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 31). Its importance, then, cannot be overesti-

mated, so that evidence the most incontrovertible was necessary, and this our Lord furnished by mingling with his friends for the long space of "forty days" prior to his ascension, and establishing his identity "by many infallible proofs," such as "*breathing*" upon them, "*eating*" with them, "*speaking*" to them, "*walking*" among them—the Greek signifying that the *strongest possible proof* was given. For many days, and no doubt many times, he appeared among them, until there was no longer any doubt as to his resurrection; and so, having thus qualified them for the work he had intrusted to their care, "he led them out as far as to Bethany"—that memorable spot so sacredly enshrined by hallowed associations—and there, pausing, gave to them the great commission to "preach the gospel to every creature." He no longer limits them to the Jewish nation, as formerly (Mark iii. 14; vi. 12; John iv. 1, 2), for, as Stier suggests, "Israel is now included among the nations—the *Gentiles*—of the earth."



Having given to them this solemn charge, "he lifted up his hands and blessed them," and as he did so "he was parted from them and received up into heaven;" so that the last view they had of their beloved friend *he still had his hands outstretched in the attitude of shedding down upon them the benedictions of heaven*: for he did not disappear mysteriously, while their backs were turned, but, as we learn from Luke (Acts i. 9), "*while they were looking at him he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.*" As far as their vision could go their eyes were riveted upon him, and after he had vanished from their sight they still stood "gazing up into heaven," until "two men in white apparel"—perhaps Moses and Elijah, as at the transfiguration—approached them, bringing the comforting assurance that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Luke xxi. 27; Mark xiii. 26 and xiv. 26; Matt. xxiv. 30 and xxvi.

64). The ascension took place probably on the Sabbath, and certainly "from the mount called Olivet" (Acts i. 12); and thus this memorable mountain, the silent witness of so many thrilling events in the history of our Lord, is invested with new interest as the dark pall with which Gethsemane's agony had shrouded it is exchanged for the bright tints of ascension glory.

Gladly would we follow the triumphant Redeemer as he leaves forever the dark scenes of suffering and conflict of his earthly life and reënters his heavenly home. Gladly would we gaze upon the scene as he stands once more in the presence of the Father, surrounded by the angelic host, who quit their accustomed avocations and gather from every quarter to greet their returning Lord. But it is utterly vain, and perhaps impious, for human imagination to attempt to portray scenes so transcendently sublime. It is enough to know that "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is

above every name," and that he is now seated "at the right-hand of God, on the great mediatorial throne." There Stephen saw him (Acts vii. 55, 56), and there, the apostle assures us, "he ever liveth to make intercession" for his people. Though for awhile separated from them, he is still intensely interested in them, for he has "gone to prepare a place for them," as he promised; and when he has prepared that place for them, and each of them for his place, he "will come again, and receive them unto himself, that where he is there they may be also, that they may behold his glory," and share it with him, for he is their "elder brother," and they are "joint heirs" with him of all the boundless possessions of God their Father. That such a destiny may await all the readers of this little book, and that they may thus spend not only "a week with Jesus," but countless cycles of vast eternity, is the earnest prayer of the author.

